

Bylaws of the Seattle Democratic Socialists of America

Originally adopted October 3, 2017 and last amended February 25, 2025

Preamble

The Seattle Local of the Democratic Socialists of America seeks to facilitate the transition to a truly democratic and socialist society, one in which the means or resources of production are democratically and socially controlled.

DSA rejects an economic order based solely on private profit, alienated labor, gross inequalities of wealth and power, discrimination based on race and sex, and brutality and violence in defense of the status quo.

DSA envisions a humane social order based on popular control of resources and production, economic planning, equitable distribution, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships.

Our conception of socialism is a profoundly democratic one. It is rooted in the belief that human beings should be free to develop to their fullest potential, that public policies should be determined not by wealth but by popular participation, and that individual liberties should be carefully safeguarded. It is committed to a freedom of speech that does not recoil from dissent, to a freedom to organize independent trade unions, women's groups, political parties, and other formations — recognizing these as essential bulwarks against the dangers of an intrusive state. It is committed to a freedom of religion that acknowledges the rights of those for whom spiritual concerns are central.

We are socialists because we are developing a concrete strategy for achieving that vision. In the present, we are building a visible socialist presence within the broad democratic left. In the long run, we hope to build a majority movement capable of making democratic socialism a reality in the United States. Our strategy acknowledges the class structure of the U.S. society. This class structure means that there is a basic conflict of interest between those sectors with enormous economic power and the vast majority of the population.

Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be the Seattle Local of the Democratic Socialists of America, also known as Seattle DSA or SDSA, and referred to throughout this document as the Local.

Article II: Basic Organization and Conventions

Section 1. General Membership

The General Membership of the Local, meeting in Convention, General or Special Meeting, shall be the highest legislative body of the organization. Between Conventions and Special Meetings, the Local Council shall be responsible for the administration of the organization and the implementation of policies formulated by the General Membership.

Section 2. Conventions

The Local shall meet in Convention annually during the month of March, with at least 60 days notice given to all members. Notice will include pertinent questions before the Local and all necessary instructions for participation. The Convention shall meet to elect officers, adopt an annual budget, and to debate and decide primarily, but not exclusively, Local issues, the political orientation of the organization, and program direction.

Section 3. Special Meetings

A Special Meeting of the Local shall be called by the Local Council or by ten percent of members, with at least five days' notice given to all members. The call to the Special Meeting shall specify the matters to be discussed therein and no other matter may be brought to the floor. The Local Council may designate a previously scheduled Informational Meeting as a special meeting with at least five days notice given to all members.

Section 4. General Meetings

The Local will hold General Meetings at least four times annually, the time and place of which shall be set in a schedule published and distributed by the Local Council. The Local Council will set the agenda for General Meetings, subject to amendment and approval by the members present. If a General Meeting will have any voting items for the membership to decide upon (amendments to the bylaws, resolutions, endorsements, etc), then the chapter must email the text of those voting items to the general membership no later than 14 days prior to the General Meeting, before 11:59 PM Pacific Time. The subject line of the email must mention that it

contains voting items for the next General Meeting, or else it shall be considered to have failed the deadline.

Section 5. Informational Meetings

The Local Council may call additional Local-wide Informational Meetings for a variety of reasons but at which official business will not be conducted and policies will not be set. For the purposes of these bylaws, Local-wide Informational Meetings shall not be considered General Meetings.

Section 6. Rules

All resolutions, amendments, and officer reports presented to the Local's membership at the Convention will allow for a question and answer period to be followed by speakers wishing to voice their opinions. All other rules covering the conduct of the Convention, General or Special Meeting shall be set by the Local Council or a committee it appoints for that purpose, subject to amendment and approval by the members present.

Section 7. Electoral Endorsements

The General Membership in Convention, General or Special Meeting is the only body authorized with making electoral endorsements on behalf of the Local. In exceptional situations the Local Council may endorse candidates by three-quarters vote where time constraints forbid holding a Special Meeting. Unless otherwise authorized, members or committees of the Local are prohibited from campaigning as representatives of DSA for candidates or ballot measures that the Local has not officially endorsed. In order to be considered for an electoral endorsement, candidates must commit to refuse funding from all for-profit corporations and their corporate officers.

Section 8. Public Representation

Unless otherwise authorized, members, officers, or committees of the Local are prohibited from representing themselves as speaking on behalf of the Local on positions or policies that the Local has not officially endorsed.

Section 9. Quorum

Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, quorum shall be set at eighty percent of the median attendance of the five most recent General Membership Meetings by members in good standing, or five percent of total membership in good standing, whichever is higher. This quorum shall be required for valid meetings of the Convention, Special Meetings, or General Meetings.

Article III: Membership

Section 1. Definition

Members in good standing will include all DSA members residing within the Local jurisdiction agreed upon by the National DSA and the Local, who have paid annual dues within the last year, have paid lifetime dues, or are current on their monthly dues, as verified by National DSA, and are not currently suspended or terminated from the Local. All Local members in good standing shall have full and equal rights of membership.

Section 2. Voting and Office

All members in good standing shall be eligible to:

- A. Vote in all elections and matters, including policies and guidelines for the operation of the Local, brought before the General Membership, and
- B. Be elected as delegates from the Local to Regional, State, or National DSA convenings, after having been a Member for at least sixty days; and
- C. Be nominated or appointed to office in the Local, after having been a Member for at least ninety days.

Section 3. Electronic Meetings and Voting

The Chapter may adopt a system for electronic meetings and voting provided all members attending are, at minimum, able to hear one another via teleconference. Elections for Local Council and delegates to Regional, State, or National DSA convenings may be conducted with an electronic ballot. Any member in good standing who wishes to delegate their vote (the “delegator”) will be permitted to assign their vote to another member in good standing (a “proxy”). The proxy will cast a vote for themselves and for the delegator. No member shall have more than one proxy vote assigned to themselves. Convenings may be conducted with an electronic ballot. Proxy votes shall not be counted on motions that amend these bylaws.

Section 4. Grievances

The Local shall have an official grievance policy in accordance with national guidelines. When such guidelines are provided, the Local must amend these bylaws outlining the grievance procedure.

Section 5. Member Discipline, Suspension and Expulsion

Pursuant to Article III, Section 4 of the National DSA constitution, the Local Council shall have the power to suspend or expel members from the Local. In order for such a finding to be made,

another member must present written charges against the member in question to the Local Council. Members facing suspension or expulsion must receive written notice of charges against them at least fifteen days before a meeting of the Local Council and must be given the opportunity to be heard before the Local Council. A two-thirds vote is required to suspend or expel a member. The Local Council will only have the power to suspend or expel a member from the Local. Only the National organization shall have the power to suspend or expel a member from the National organization. Decisions on suspension or expulsion may be appealed at the Local Convention, General or Special Meeting, or to the National Political Committee of DSA.

Members may be disciplined:

- A. If they are found to have harassed or acted violently against another member; or
- B. If they are found to be in substantial disagreement with the principles or policies of the organization; or
- C. If they consistently engage in undemocratic, disruptive behavior; or
- D. If they are found to be engaged in coordinated entryist behavior on behalf of an outside organization.

Article IV: Elections

Section 1. Nominations

All 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 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 90 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, default to the member(s) who would meet the requirements that are ranked highest, and remove the member(s) who do not meet any requirements who are ranked lowest. Those running may also choose to step aside.

Section 3. 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 Groups 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. Definition & Purpose

The Local Council (LC) is the democratically elected leadership body. It serves as the second highest executive, legislative and judicial body, below General Membership. The Local Council manages the day-to-day affairs of the Local between General Meetings. This includes acting as official chapter spokespersons, handling finances, accounts, member data, liaising with working groups and committees, as well as voting on resolutions as it sees fit. It consists of seven (7) at-large seats.

Section 2. Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy on the Local Council, the Local Council may appoint a replacement by majority vote to serve until the following election, subject to approval of the General Membership.

Section 3. Terms

LC members shall be elected at the annual convention and serve for one (1) year, and until their successors are elected, unless removed for cause as outlined in Article V, Section 10.

Section 4. Delegation & Oversight

The Local Council may delegate any of the responsibilities assigned to it in these bylaws to members or bodies of members as it sees fit. The Local Council will oversee all Committees, Chapter Officers, any member or members it has delegated its responsibilities to, and other official formations of the Local.

Section 5. State of the Local

The Local Council is responsible for presenting a “State of the Local” address each year at the annual Local Convention.

Section 6. Conflict Resolution

The Local Council is responsible for fairly adjudicating disagreements between members or groups of members within the Local. This shall include developing and overseeing an accountable and fair mechanism of conflict resolution.

Section 7. Meetings and Voting

Unless stated otherwise in these bylaws, all elected and appointed members of the Local Council have full and equal voting rights for Local Council decisions. The Local Council shall hold official meetings no less than once every month, the time and place of which shall be set in a schedule published and distributed by the Local Council to the General Membership no less than seven days prior. Regular meetings of the Local Council may be attended by all members in good standing and minutes must be provided to the General Membership including how every Local Council member voted on every question.

Section 8. Special Meetings

Special Meetings of the Local Council may be called by at least one third ($\frac{1}{3}$) (rounded to the nearest whole) of its members on at least five days’ notice to Local Council members and the General Membership when time constraints prohibit scheduling a regular meeting. The call to the Special Meeting shall specify the matters to be discussed therein and no other matter may be brought to the floor. Special Meetings of the Local Council may be attended by all members in good standing and minutes must be provided to the General Membership.

Section 9. Quorum

A quorum of more than half of its members shall be required for a valid meeting of the Local Council.

Section 10: Termination of Local Council Members

Termination of a Local Council Member may be initiated in two ways. First, the Local Council may vote to remove an LC member from the Local Council in the event that the member is unable or unwilling to perform their duties.

Removal of a Local Council member requires a three-quarters majority vote by the Local Council. The Local Council must notify the member in writing of the termination and they may request to appeal the decision at the next general membership meeting. Reinstatement of a terminated member requires a two-thirds majority vote of the membership present at a General Membership meeting.

Alternatively, a petition to remove one or more Council Members, signed by no less than the lower of ten percent of the median number of members attending the last five general membership meetings or twenty (20) members, may be presented to the Local Council; the Local Council must then call a Special Meeting where by a two-thirds majority the membership may terminate the Local Council Member. Grounds for termination include but are not limited to:

- A. missing more than two Local Council meetings in succession or three meetings during the term without an acceptable excuse, or
- B. gross incompetence, witting mismanagement of funds, consistently acting or encouraging action in contravention of the best interests of the organization.

Article VI: Chapter Officers

Section 1. Definition & Purpose

Chapter Officers are members in good standing who are delegated by the chapter to handle specific areas of chapter business day to day. They serve under the direction of the Local Council.

Section 2. Creation

Chapter Officer positions may be created either by a bylaws amendment or via adoption of a policy by the membership as provided in the parliamentary authority.

Section 3. Powers

Chapter Officers are empowered to make decisions within their area of work but any decision made by a Chapter Officer may be overridden by the Local Council or the membership as provided in the parliamentary authority. Appointment to a Chapter Officer Position does not make one a member of the Local Council nor does it give the Chapter Officer so appointed a vote on the Local Council.

Section 4. Appointment

Chapter Officers are nominated by the Local Council with an approval vote by the General Membership at a Chapter Meeting. If a nominee to a Chapter Officer position is rejected by General Membership, General Membership may nominate and elect an officer to that position as provided in the parliamentary authority.

Section 5. Holding Multiple Seats

An LC member may be appointed to a position as a Chapter Officer. However, no member may hold multiple Chapter Officer positions.

Section 6. Terms and Removal

Officers shall hold office for a term of one (1) year or until their successors are elected. Officers may be removed from office at the pleasure of the Local Council or the membership as provided in the parliamentary authority.

Section 7. Officers Named in the Bylaws

A: Facilitator

The Facilitator shall organize and preside over all official meetings of the organization and the Local Council or appoint a member to preside.

B: Secretary

The Secretary shall be listed on financial documents.

The Secretary is responsible for taking minutes of all General Membership and Local Council Meetings, and shall be responsible for publishing these minutes, as well as resolutions, reports, and other official records of the Local. The Secretary may appoint, but must oversee, a temporary proxy minutes-taker for any meeting.

The Secretary shall transfer official records in good condition to their successor.

Under the direction of the Local Council, the Secretary will be responsible for developing and/or obtaining documentation required for maintaining the Local's incorporation status (or statuses), and submitting them to the State and/or Federal government as applicable. Records from the process shall be retained in a manner accessible to the Local Council and succeeding Local Councils. Such records will be made accessible to Local members upon request.

C: Treasurer

The Treasurer will be responsible for administration of funds, budget, and financial organization of the Local, including overseeing fundraising activities for the Local. All funds collected by the Local will be turned over to the Treasurer, who shall deposit them in a bank account under the name of the Local.

The Treasurer will report to the Local Council on the financial status of the organization at each Local Council Meeting. The Treasurer will maintain transparent and open financial reports available to the entire membership upon request to a member of the Local Council.

The Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring that membership dues are paid up-to-date.

The Treasurer will prepare the annual Local budget, and deliver the Local financial report at General Meetings of the Local. The Treasurer will prepare and post at least once a month, in a location accessible to the members of the Local Council, a written financial report that includes categorized income and expenditures, beginning and ending balances, and beginning and end dates for the time period encompassed by the report.

The Treasurer will obtain, develop and provide to the Secretary financial information necessary for maintaining the incorporation status of the Local.

Expenditures over \$200 must be approved by the Treasurer and Secretary. The Treasurer shall be listed on financial documents.

Article VII: Committees

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 VIII: Working Groups

Section 1. Definitions 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.

Article IX: Caucuses

Section 1. Definition and Purpose

Caucuses are independent, unofficial formations of members within the Local. The Local encourages the formation of Caucuses to promote a vibrant democratic culture within the organization. With or without consent from or recognition by any official Local leadership or the Local itself, members may self-organize into temporary or permanent caucuses according to shared interests, affinities, and/or political goals. Caucuses may promote policies and actions for the Local to take on, and may challenge Local leadership and/or official Local policies.

Section 2. Official Recognition

A Caucus will be formally recognized by the Local in one or more official media if no fewer than five members in good standing sign a mission statement that includes the name and purpose of the Caucus. This mission statement must be reaffirmed annually to retain formal recognition. The Local Secretary will be responsible for ensuring proper recognition.

Article X: Branches

Branches are geographical subgroups of the Local consisting of at least five full members in good standing. Branches may hold Informational Meetings, outreach events, and other gatherings where official business of the Local will not be conducted.

For the purpose of formation, leadership election, and recognition by the chapter, a branch shall be subject to the same rules as working groups, as described in Article IV, Section 4 (Working Group and Committee Chair Elections) and in Article VIII (Working Groups).

Article XI: Delegates

Delegates to National, Regional, and State bodies shall be elected by the General Membership at a Special or General Meeting within ninety days of the Convention or other gathering at which delegates are needed. When scheduling a delegate election, the Local Council should always aim to minimize the cost of travel for elected delegates. The delegate election process will conform to DSA National bylaws and the National Convention calendar.

Article XII: Dues

Section 1. Local Dues

Pursuant to Article II, Section 5 of the National DSA Bylaws, the Local may institute, change, or abolish voluntary Local Dues by a majority vote of the Membership at a General Membership Meeting.

Section 2. Solidarity Fund

Ten percent of all Dues received by the Local will be allocated to a Solidarity Fund. These funds will be reserved for bail payments, support for workplace organizing, and related needs, as approved by the Local Council.

Article XIII: Amendments

Section 1. Process and Provisions

The Bylaws must be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of members present at the Local Convention, or a General Meeting. Furthermore, the bylaws voted on at the October 3rd, 2017 General Meeting will be provisional for one year, and must be revisited by the General Membership during the 2019 Local Convention.

Section 2. Amendments at the Local Convention

For consideration at the Local Convention, amendments must be submitted to the Local Council at least thirty days before the Local Convention, and may be submitted by any two members in good standing. The Local Council shall publish all proposed amendments to the membership at that time.

The Local Council shall appoint a bylaws committee which will review submitted amendments and make recommendations to the Local Convention.

Section 3. Amendments at a General Meeting

For consideration at a General Meeting, amendments may be submitted by any twenty members in good standing. Amendments must be submitted to the Local Council at least thirty days before the General Meeting. The Local Council shall publish all proposed amendments to the membership at that time. The Local Council will review submitted amendments and make recommendations at the General Meeting.

Article XIV: Rules of Order

Section 1. Parliamentary Authority

The Local Council and other bodies where official business is conducted may propose standing rules, special rules of order, and any other procedures which shall be effective upon their ratification by a majority of the members present. The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern in all cases in which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws, special rules of order, and any procedures approved by the members of this Chapter.

Section 2. Interpretation

These bylaws shall be interpreted by the Local Council, subject only to appeal to the Local Convention, General, or Special Meeting. The interpretation of the Local Convention, General, or Special Meeting shall be final.