

Bylaws of the Richmond Democratic Socialists of America



Amended
November 9, 2017

ARTICLE I. Name

The name of the Local shall be the Richmond Democratic Socialists of America, a not-for-profit corporation.

ARTICLE II. Purpose

The Richmond Democratic Socialists of America seeks to facilitate the transition to a truly democratic and socialist society, one in which the means/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 III. Membership

Section 1. Membership

Members of the Richmond DSA will be those individuals whose dues to national DSA are paid in full, who reside and/or work in Richmond area and are not currently a member of another chapter. It will be the responsibility of members to approve policies and guidelines for the operation of the local chapter, to elect delegates to the national convention, to vote on matters related to national policy, and to make recommendations on issues and other matters to the National Political Committee of DSA.

Section 2. Removal of Members

If a full member is found to be in substantial disagreement with the principles or policies of national DSA, or if they are found to be consistently engaging in undemocratic, disruptive behavior, or if they are found to be under the discipline of any self-defined democratic centralist organization, the Local may vote to expel them from DSA. In order for such a finding to be made, another DSA member must formally prefer written charges against the member in question to the Local Steering Committee, which shall set the date of a Local meeting for deliberations on the charges. The member in question must receive a copy of the written charges and notice of the meeting a minimum of two weeks before that meeting takes place. Expulsion of a member or affiliate member requires a two-thirds vote of the Local meeting. An expelled full member may appeal to the National Political Committee of DSA.

Section 3. Dues

The Local chapter may establish a Local pledge system of voluntary donations for its members.

ARTICLE IV. Local Meetings

Section 1. Local Convention

The Local will hold a minimum of one Local Convention annually, and all members of the Local will receive three weeks written (or electronic) notice and an agenda of the Local Convention. The Local Convention will elect Local officers and other members of the Steering Committee and may adopt an annual budget. In general, it is the highest legislative body of the Local.

Section 2. 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 Steering Committee. The General Meetings will set Local policy and work priorities, and will include political education sessions.

The Local Steering Committee will set the agenda for General Meetings, and notify all members of the Local by written (or electronic) notice at least one week before the Meeting. In general, the General Meeting is the operating legislative body of the Local.

Section 3. Emergency Meetings

The Local Steering Committee may call an Emergency Meeting of the Local on five days' notice when an urgent and important matter requires deliberation.

Section 4. Quorum

A quorum of 20 percent of the members (but not fewer than six persons) is required for Local Conventions and General or Emergency Meetings to transact business.

ARTICLE V. Local Officers: Powers and Duties

Section 1. Officers and Terms

- a. The officers of the Local will be two Co-chairs, Secretary, and Treasurer. The term of office will be one year, and shall run from February 1 to January 31 or until their successors are elected.
- b. If half of the officers elected are cisgendered white men, then the elections for the other officers shall advantage candidates who identify as women, genderqueer, people of color, or people with disabilities.

Section 2. Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy in any Local office, the Local Steering Committee will appoint a replacement until the next General Meeting, which will elect a replacement to complete the term of office.

Section 3. Co-chairs

- a. The Co-chairs will be the chief executive officers of the Local. They will preside over Local and Steering Committee meetings or will appoint a substitute to assume the powers and duties of the presiding officer as specified in Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised. The Co-chairs will be the official public spokespersons for the Local and will initiate such actions and policies as the Local's general welfare may demand. In the event that one Co-chair is unable to perform their duties for a single event or a longer period of time, the other Co-chair will serve as replacement.
- b. The Co-chairs will be responsible also for coordinating the day-to-day operations and political work of the Local's branches and committees.
- c. The Co-chairs will report to Local General Meetings on the business of the Steering Committee Meetings, at which time a copy of the minutes of those meetings will be available for inspection.
- d. Both of the Co-chairs cannot be of the same gender identity.

Section 4. Secretary

a. The Secretary will be responsible for answering all correspondence and queries of the Local, and for maintaining an up-to-date membership list of the Local. They will ensure effective communication with the national DSA. They will temporarily assume the responsibilities of the Chair, if neither Co-chair is able to do so.

b. The Secretary will be responsible also for the taking of minutes of all local and Steering Committee Meetings, and shall have custody of these minutes, and the resolutions, reports and other official records of the Local. They shall transfer official records in good condition to their successor. Official records shall include meeting minutes and member lists.

Section 5. Treasurer

The Treasurer will be responsible for the funds and financial records of 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. In cooperation with the Secretary, 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 to the Local Convention of the Local, as well as periodic progress reports as requested by the Steering Committee of the Local.

Section 6. Additional Duties

The Local Steering Committee may assign additional temporary duties to an officer of the Local, so long as such assignments do not conflict with the designation of responsibilities outlined in these Bylaws.

ARTICLE VI. Steering Committee

Section 1. Composition

The Local Steering Committee will be composed of the four officers of the Local, the chair(s) of Local Youth Sections, the chair(s) of any Local Branches, the chair(s) of any Committees, and four members elected at large. At-large members shall be elected pursuant to Article V, section 1, subsection (b).

Section 2. Duties

- a. The Steering Committee administers the affairs of the Local and oversees the implementation of the decisions of the Local Convention and General Meetings; it may also propose policy to the Local Convention and General Meetings. It shall have the power to receive reports of any Committee or Branch, and advise thereon, to call emergency meetings of the Local, and to act on any matter that requires immediate and urgent action. The Steering Committee is the regular steering body of the Local, and thus subordinate to its legislative bodies, the Local Convention and General Meetings.
- b. The Local Steering Committee will be responsible for establishing program activities for the Local chapter, for proposing guidelines and policies that will subsequently be voted on by full members of DSA, and for acting on the organization's behalf between Local meetings.

Section 3. Meetings

The meetings of the Steering Committee will be held at the call of the Chair at such intervals as may be determined by a prior Steering Committee Meeting or by consultation with any three members of the Steering Committee. All members of the Steering Committee must (ordinarily) be given four days oral or written notice of regular Steering Committee Meetings; a 24-hour notice may be given under special emergency circumstances.

Section 4. Quorum

A quorum of one-half of the members of the Steering Committee is required for the transaction of Steering Committee business.

ARTICLE VII. Branches

Section 1. Definition

A branch is a subgroup of the Local defined by geography. The chairs of branches will hold membership on the Local Steering Committee.

Section 2. Youth Sections

Branches established on college campuses and consisting of students will be called Local Youth Sections. Youth Sections must have at least five full members in good standing with the national Young Democratic Socialists of America. The chairs of Local Youth Sections will hold membership on the Local Steering Committee.

ARTICLE VIII. Committees and Working Groups

Section 1. Definition

a. The Local will have Committees to fulfill its ongoing organizational needs. Committees may be established by a vote of full members at a General Meeting of the Local.

b. The Local will have Working Groups to engage in a specific area of political work (e.g. peace action, labor, environment, racial justice, feminist, etc.), and are dissolved upon completion of that work. Working Groups may be established by a vote of full members at a General Meeting of the Local.

Section 2. Duties

Chairs of Committees and Working Groups will keep the Steering Committee and the General Meetings of the Local informed on the activities of the committee.

ARTICLE IX. Delegates to National, Regional, and State Bodies

Local delegates and alternates to the National Convention will be elected by full members of the Local Chapter of DSA. Elections for the National Convention delegation shall be held on the schedule announced by the national organization. Delegates and alternates to the National Convention shall be elected pursuant to Article V, section 1, subsection (b).

ARTICLE X. Prohibited Activity

Richmond Local shall not engage in activity prohibited by the IRS guidelines established for 501(c)4 organizations or similar rules established by the state of Virginia. Nor shall the local engage in any activity prohibited by resolutions adopted by DSA's National Convention or DSA's National Political Committee.

ARTICLE XI. Nominations and Recalls

Section 1. Nominations Board

A three-person Nominations Board shall be established at least one month prior to every election by vote of a General Meeting and serve as needed for one year. It shall solicit and receive nominations for the positions to be elected. The Nominations Board shall be elected pursuant to Article V, section 1, subsection (b).

Section 2. Nominations Process

a. Nominations for Local officers and other members of the Steering Committee shall be opened at least 30 days before and closed 5 days prior to the Local Convention.

b. Nominations for delegates to the National Convention shall be opened according to the schedule announced by the national organization and closed 5 days prior to the General Meeting at which the delegates are to be elected.

c. The call for nominations shall be announced to full members of DSA in advance of the Local Convention or appropriate General Meeting.

Section 3. Uncontested Positions

If a position is uncontested, the nominee will be declared elected by acclamation.

Section 4. Recalls

a. The Co-chairs shall announce a recall election if they receive a petition requesting the recall of a member of the Steering Committee, signed by one-fifth of the membership of the Local. The Nominations Board shall hold a recall election no later than two weeks after receipt of the petition, and shall call an Emergency Meeting if necessary. The members of the Nominations Board shall preside over the recall election.

b. If a majority of the membership present votes in favor of recalling the member of the Steering Committee, then the member is immediately removed from office or seat.

c. If a member of the Steering Committee is recalled, the Local shall immediately elect a replacement to fill the office or seat for the remainder of the term.

d. If a member of the Steering Committee has faced a recall election during one term of office and has not been recalled, a second recall election against that member shall be called only if the petition requesting such is signed by one-third of the membership.

e. If a member of the Steering Committee has faced two recall elections during one term of office and has not been recalled, the member may only be recalled by a petition requesting such that is signed by a majority of the membership.

Section 5. Initial Officer Election

The initial election of officers shall occur on February 26, 2017. These officers' terms shall expire on January 31, 2018.

ARTICLE XII. Grievances

Section 1. Grievance Procedure

The Local shall adopt harassment and grievance procedures pursuant to those adopted by national DSA.

Section 2. Grievance Officers

At least two grievance officers shall be elected every year and settle disputes, grievances, and instances of harassment among members of the Local. Grievance officers shall satisfy the requirements for harassment grievances officer (HGOs) adopted by national DSA. The grievance officers shall be elected pursuant to Article V, section 1, subsection (b).

Section 3. Code of Conduct

The Meetings of the Local may adopt a Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct shall include as prohibited any behavior prohibited under the harassment and grievance policy adopted by national DSA.

ARTICLE XIII. Amendments

Proposed amendments to these Bylaws must be made by written resolution, endorsed by five members of the Local chapter of DSA, and submitted to the Steering Committee a month in advance of a Local Convention or General Meeting. The Steering Committee is required to provide the Local membership with two weeks' written notice of the proposed amendments. The amendment must be approved by a two-thirds vote of a Local Convention or General Meeting.

ARTICLE XIV. Rules of the Local

Section 1. Rules

The Rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, shall govern this Local in cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these Bylaws. Consensus decision-making is desirable where feasible, but meetings must submit to Robert's Rules of Order upon the request of a member.

Section 2. Action Out of Order

Any action taken by an officer or member of the Local in contravention of these Bylaws is null and void.