

Bylaws of the Knoxville-area Local of the Democratic Socialists of America

[Adopted at the June 6, 2016 Monthly Organizing Committee Meeting and as Amended without Objections at the July 2, 2018 General Chapter Meeting and August 6, 2018 Regular Chapter Meeting)

ARTICLE I. Name.

The name of the Local shall be the Knoxville-area Local of the Democratic Socialists of America.

ARTICLE II. Purpose.

The Knoxville-area Local of the 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. We believe 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. We are 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. We are committed to freedom of religion.

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 Knoxville-area Local DSA will be all those who are members in good standing of the national Democratic Socialists of America and who reside and/or work in the following Tennessee counties: Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne,

Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, McMinn, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Sevier, and Union. 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 member is found to be in substantial disagreement with the principles or policies of national DSA, or if s/he is found to be consistently engaging in undemocratic, disruptive behavior, or if s/he is found to be under the discipline of any self-defined democratic centralist organization, the Local may vote to expel her/him 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 Executive 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. General Meeting.

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

Section 2. Regular Meetings.

The Local will hold Regular Meetings at least four times annually, the time and place of which shall be set in a schedule published and distributed by the Local Executive Committee. The Regular Meetings will set Local policy and work priorities, and will include political education sessions.

The Local Executive Committee will set the agenda for Regular Meetings. In general, the Regular Meeting is the operating legislative body of the Local.

Section 3. Emergency Meetings.

The Local Executive 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 no fewer than six persons is required for General, Regular, or Emergency Meetings to transact business.

ARTICLE V. Local Officers: Powers and Duties.

Section 1. Officers and Terms

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 August 1 to July 31 or until their successors are elected. The local shall aspire to have its officers reflect the demographics of the membership and the larger community.

Section 2. Vacancies.

In the event of a vacancy in the office one of the two Co-Chairs, the other Co-Chair will serve as Chair until another Co-Chair is appointed or elected. In the event of a vacancy in any other Local office, the Local Executive Committee will appoint a replacement for the remainder of the term.

Section 3. The Co-Chairs.

a. The Co-Chairs will be the chief executive officers of the Local. 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.

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 Regular Meetings on the business of the Executive Committee Meetings, at which time a copy of the minutes of those meetings will be available for inspection.

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. S/he will ensure effective communication with the national DSA. S/he 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 Executive Committee Meetings, and shall have custody of these minutes, and the resolutions, reports and other official records of the Local. S/he shall transfer official records in good condition to her/his 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 General Meeting of the Local, as well as periodic progress reports as requested by the Executive Committee of the Local.

Section 6. Additional Duties.

The Local Executive 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. Executive Committee.

Section 1. Composition.

The Local Executive Committee will be composed of the four officers of the Local, the chair of any Local Youth Section or any member elected by each Youth Section to represent the section on the Executive Committee, and the chair of any Local Branch or any member elected by any Local Branch to represent the branch on the Executive Committee.

Section 2. Duties.

a) The Executive Committee administers the affairs of the Local and oversees the implementation of the decisions of the General and Regular Meetings; it may also propose policy to the General and Regular 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 Executive Committee is the regular executive body of the Local, and thus subordinate to its Legislative bodies, the General and Regular Meetings.

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

Section 4. Quorum.

A quorum of three members of the Executive Committee is required for the transaction of Executive Committee business.

ARTICLE VII. Branches.

Section 1. Definition.

A branch is a subgroup of the Local consisting of at least five full members in good standing with national DSA. Branches may be defined by geography, work site, constituency (e.g., labor, minority, feminist), or area of political work (e.g., peace action, environmental movement). The chairs of branches will hold membership on the Local Executive 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 members in good standing with national DSA. The chairs of Local Youth Sections will hold membership on the Local Executive Committee.

ARTICLE VIII Committees.

Section 1. Duration.

The Local will have Ad Hoc Committees, which will exist for a limited and explicit duration. Ad Hoc Committees may be established by a vote of full members at a Regular Meeting of the Local.

Section 2. Duties.

Chairs of Ad Hoc Committees will keep the Executive Committee and the Regular Meetings of the Local informed on the activities of the committee.

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

Section 1. Convention.

Local delegates and alternates to the National Convention will be elected by members of the Local Chapter of DSA. Elections for the National Convention delegation shall be held on the schedule announced by the national organization.

ARTICLE X. Prohibited Activity

The Knoxville-area DSA 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 Tennessee. 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 Process. [Replaced. Amended by chapter vote September 14, 2020. See Amendment I below.]

Section 2. Uncontested Positions.

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

ARTICLE XII. 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 Executive Committee a month in advance of a General or Regular Meeting. The Executive Committee is required to provide the Local membership with two weeks' written notice of the proposed amendments. The amendment must be approved by a majority vote of two consecutive (Regular or General) Local meetings.

ARTICLE XIII. 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.

AMENDMENT I.

[The following language to amend Article XI, Section 1 was approved by membership vote on September 14, 2020, pursuant to the bylaws, Article XII] [Amendment I was amended at the April 14, 2025 monthly meeting, striking all but the last sentence of the second paragraph.]

Nominations for local officers and delegates to the National Convention will be opened 30 days before the respective elections, and closed five days before the elections. The nominations may be made orally during the general meeting prior to the election, or in written or email submissions to the Secretary of the chapter.

Members may nominate themselves.

The Secretary will inform members of their nominations. Nominees may submit, in writing or via email, a statement in support of their bid for the office they are seeking. The Secretary will publish those statements to the general membership prior to the election. Nominees will be given time to make oral statements in support of their bids on the day of the election.

[Article V was amended to establish two Co-Chairs instead of a Chair and Vice-chair, approved by membership vote on February 10, 2025, pursuant to the bylaws, Article XII]