

Bylaws of the New Orleans Democratic Socialists of America

Amended and Ratified by the General Membership 10/9/2017



Preamble

All working people, simply because they work, are responsible for the reproduction and persistence of our societies, economies, and cultures.

However, working people are not guaranteed access to the direction and planning of society, be it on matters of public investment, environmental destruction, or imperialist wars.

Therefore, all workers, through all forms of labor, irrespective of nationality, have a class interest in expanding their democratic rights in society.

But, workers and capitalists are in an irreconcilable struggle over political-economic enfranchisement.

Democratic Socialists aim to transform this situation by expanding working-class influence in Southeast Louisiana and society as a whole through the support and creation of genuine working-class institutions that foster values of equality, justice, and peace.

Through these methods, we aim to reorganize society where all people have natural, political, and economic rights, for the purpose of uniting humanity under principles of peace, love, solidarity and prosperity, in harmony with the ecosystems upon which we depend.

Article 1: Name

The name of this organization shall be the New Orleans Democratic Socialists of America, also known as New Orleans DSA or DSA 504, and referred to throughout this document as the Local or Chapter.

Article 2: Basic Organization and Conventions

Section 1: General Membership. The General Membership of the Local, meeting in Convention, Special Meeting or General Meeting shall be the highest legislative body of the organization; providing that Special Meetings shall have the authority to deal with only those matters for which they may be called.

Section 2: General Meetings. The Local will hold meetings on a regular basis to conduct the business of the Local. These will be considered General Meetings. An annual schedule of these meetings will be publicized to members in good standing.

Section 3: Conventions. The Local shall meet in Convention annually during the first six months of the year, with at least thirty days' notice given to all members. The Convention shall meet to elect officers and to debate and decide primarily, but not exclusively, Local issues, the political orientation of the organization, and program direction.

Section 4: Special Meetings. By call of forty percent of the Local Council or petition of ten percent of members, a Special Meeting shall be called, with notice given to all members at least ten days prior to the 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.

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 should not be considered General Meetings.

Section 6: Rules. All resolutions and reports presented to the Local's membership at the Convention will allow for a question and answer period. All rules covering the conduct of a Convention or Special Meeting shall be developed by the Local Council and at the outset of said meeting, may be amended, but must be ratified by a 2/3rds majority vote.

Section 7: Electoral Endorsements. The General Membership in Convention or Special Meeting is the only body authorized with making electoral endorsements on behalf of the Local. Unless otherwise authorized, members or committees of New Orleans DSA are forbidden from campaigning as representatives of DSA for candidates or ballot measures that the Local has not officially endorsed.

Section 8: Quorums. Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, quorum of ten percent of the membership shall be required for valid meetings of the Convention, Special Meeting, or General Meeting. A quorum of forty percent of the membership plus one member shall be required for Electoral Endorsement votes.

Section 9: Revenue and Funds.

Section 9(a). The revenue of this Local shall be derived from assessments, sale of supplies, interest on deposits, grants, and donations from the working-class. It is the duty of every officer, agent, employee, and other representative of this Local to hold its money and property solely for the benefit of this Local and its members to manage, invest, and expend the same in accordance with these Bylaws and any resolutions of the governing bodies adopted thereunder, to refrain from dealing with this Local as an adverse party in any matter connected with duties and from holding or acquiring any pecuniary or personal interest which conflicts with the interest of this Local, and to account to this organization for any profit received under direction of its behalf. Since the Highest-Decision-Making-Body is vested in the Local Council between General Meetings, the Local Council and the Local Treasurer in addition to the General Meeting shall manage, invest and expend the funds and property of this Local in accordance with all applicable provisions of these Bylaws and any resolution adopted by the Local and General Meeting not inconsistent therewith.

Section 9(b). Except as otherwise provided in Local Bylaws the revenue of this chapter will be divided into a General Fund, a Rapid Solidarity Fund, and other committee-based funds, at the discretion of the General Meeting, or Local Council, between gatherings thereof.

Section 9(c). The General Fund shall be maintained and disbursed in accordance with the authority vested in Article Two (2) Section Two (2), and in accordance with the provisions in Article Eleven (11) of these Bylaws. Purpose of disbursements shall conform to the general welfare and operation of this Local.

Section 9(d). Council and committee funds shall be maintained and disbursed in accordance with the authority vested in Article Six (6) Section Two (2) and in accordance with the provisions in

Article Eleven (11) of these Bylaws. Purpose of disbursements shall conform to the general welfare and operation of said Council or Committee.

Section 9(e). A uniform system of bookkeeping and records shall be established by the Local Council and all officers, committees, and councils will conform to said uniform system of bookkeeping and records in submitting a correspondence with the Local Council.

Section 9(f). All monies collected by the Treasurer must be received in the form of money order, bank draft, check, direct deposit, wire transfer made payable to New Orleans Democratic Socialists of America; except when petty cash is collected at events, which must be logged in the uniform system of bookkeeping and records established by the Local Council. All monies must be deposited in a credit union in the name of New Orleans Democratic Socialists of America, and only trustees may have access to bank transactions.

Article 3: Membership

Section 1: Definition. The Membership of New Orleans DSA shall be composed of all DSA members residing within the jurisdiction of the Local. Members in good standing will include all DSA members who have paid dues within the last year or who have paid lifetime dues, as verified by the National Office, 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 comprise the Membership and shall be eligible to:

1. Vote in all elections and matters brought before the Membership;
2. Be elected or appointed to office in the Local;
3. Be appointed as delegates from the Local to any Regional, State, or National DSA convenings.

Section 3: Proxy Voting. Members in good standing who cannot vote in an election due to unavoidable conflicts must notify the Local Council in advance of the vote, naming the proxy voter. A member who is present at an election meeting may only hold up to two proxies.

Section 4: Member Discipline, Suspension, and Expulsion. Pursuant to the National DSA constitution, the Local Council shall have the power to suspend or expel members from the Local. A two-thirds vote is required to suspend or expel a member. The Local Council alone will have the power to suspend or expel a member from the Local. In all cases, prior to discipline, the Local Council should consider and abide by the principles of privacy, accountability, and restorative justice. Members can be suspended or expelled:

1. If they are found to have maliciously inflicted serious emotional or physical harm against another member;

2. If they are found to be in substantial disagreement with the principles or policies of the organization, including, but not limited to, engaging in behavior or speech that violates DSA's commitment to anti-racism, feminist socialism, and equality;

3. If they consistently engage in undemocratic, disruptive behavior; or if they are found to be engaging in intentionally subversive activities or acting on behalf of or under the direction of another organization or body aiming to disrupt the Local's activities, membership, or events.

Article 4: Election of Officers

Section 1: Nominations. All Officers of the Local Council shall be elected at the Local's annual Convention. Nominations to run for the Local Council must be submitted to the presiding Local Council at least 30 days in advance of the Convention. Any member may nominate another member in good standing for elected position in the Local who has attended at least 33% of the General Meetings of the Local in a non-founding year. No one may nominate themselves.

Section 2: Process. The elections process shall be fair, transparent, and democratic, occurring at the annual convention. The Local Council will be responsible for ensuring that elections are held, and may appoint an Elections Committee to oversee the process.

Section 3: Notice of Elections. The Local Council shall give notice of any Local election in a dedicated email announcement no later than fifteen days prior to the election. This announcement shall include the time and place of the election, the candidates and/or questions before the membership in the election, and all pertinent instructions.

Section 4: Recall of Officers. Pursuit to Article 2, Section 4, Local Council Members, including those appointed by committees, may be recalled by a 2/3rds vote of the Special Meeting as gathered. If removed by 2/3rds vote, said member cannot stand for or serve as a committee representative to the Local Council or a Local Officer position for one year.

Article 5: Local Council

Section 1: Purpose. The New Orleans DSA Local Council serves as the democratically elected leadership of the Local and is the highest legislative and judicial body under the General Membership. The Local Council shall set, maintain, and carry out policies which advance the principles, policies, and strategies enumerated in these bylaws and by the General Membership. The Local Council shall manage the day-to-day affairs of the Local between General Meetings.

Section 2: Officers. The Local Council shall consist of two (2) co-chairs, one (1) membership chair, one (1) secretary, one (1) treasurer, and a steward representing each of the official committees.

Section 2(a). Co-Chairs: The Co-Chairs shall preside over all official meetings of the organization and the Local Council, shall have responsibility for overall direction and management of the organization, and shall interpret the bylaws as well as the policies and priorities set by the Membership, subject to appeal by the Local Council. The Co-Chairs are responsible for scheduling all Local Council meetings and preparing all agendas thereof. The Co-Chairs are responsible for consistent communications with all committee leaders and facilitating collaboration and

coordination between them. 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. Additionally:

1. The Co-Chairs will also act as, or appoint, the official representatives of the Local to the National office and to other DSA Locals. This does not apply during official business at DSA Conventions at the state, regional, and national level when Local Delegates may act independently on behalf of the Local's membership.
2. The Co-Chairs serve as executive officers of the Local. If the Local develops financial accounts and policies, the Co-Chairs will be listed on financial accounts along with the Treasurer.
3. At least one Co-Chair must not identify as white, cisgender, and male; both Co-chairs must also identify as working-class.

Section 2(b). Membership Chair: The Membership Chair is responsible for assisting the Co-Chairs with all their duties. If both Co-Chairs are unable to perform their duties, the Membership Chair shall perform all duties and assume all responsibilities of the Co-Chairs until such a time as one or both Co-Chairs are able to resume their posts. In the event that the two Co-Chairs disagree on a course of action, the Membership Chair may be called upon to break the tie. The Membership Chair shall be required to audit the financial records of the local and the Treasurer biannually. Additionally, the Membership Chair is responsible for maintaining the Local's official membership roster and verifying if a member is in good standing, and shall establish coincidentally with the announcement of the annual Convention the members in good standing who are eligible to vote.

Section 2(c). Secretary: 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. That proxy may not vote on behalf of the Secretary. Additionally:

1. The Secretary shall transfer official records in good condition to their successor.
2. The Secretary will assume the responsibilities of one of the Co-Chairs, if both Co-Chairs and the Membership Chair are unable to do so.

Section 2(d). Treasurer: The Treasurer will be responsible for administration of funds, budget, and financial organization of the Local, including overseeing fundraising activities for the Local. The Treasurer will provide:

1. A report to the Local Council on the financial status of the organization at each Local Council meeting, according to the agreed uniform system of bookkeeping;
2. A report to the General Meetings on the financial status of the organization at each General Meeting, according to the agreed uniform system of bookkeeping;
3. And maintain transparent and open financial reports available to the entire membership upon request by an officer of the Local Council.

Section 2(e). Committee Stewards: Each committee steward will be responsible for communicating and incorporating the work performed in committees in Local Council activities. Each committee is exclusively responsible for delegating their own steward, which may also be a chair, or co-chair.

Section 3: Vacancies. In the event of a vacancy on the Local Council, the Local Council may appoint a replacement to serve until the following election by a majority vote.

Section 4: Terms and Term Limits. Officers shall be elected at the annual convention and their terms shall last until the completion of the following annual convention, approximately one year later. No member may hold the same office for more than two consecutive terms, with the following exceptions:

Treasurer Trustees. A trustee shall be elected at the annual convention and their term shall last until the completion of the second annual convention of their term, approximately two years. The Trustees shall be alternately elected, with only one trustee elected per annual convention.

Committee Stewards. Committee Stewards are elected pursuant to Article 6. Stewards sitting on the Local Council shall not be subject to any prescribed term limit, unless otherwise determined by the committees themselves. No member may serve as steward simultaneously for more than one committee.

Section 5: Oversight. To ensure that the policies and strategies of the General Membership can be realized by the Local, the Local Council will oversee all Committees and other official formations of the Local, and help all parties within the Local to operate in concert. To this end, the Local Council is authorized to act, only by a 2/3rds or more majority, to form, disband, and/or consolidate Committees, as well as appoint Committee leadership. See Article 6 for more information on Committees.

Section 6: State of the Local. The Local Council is responsible for presenting a State of the Local Address each year at the annual Convention.

Section 7: 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 8: Voting. All elected and appointed members of the Local Council have full and equal voting rights for Local Council decisions.

Section 9: Termination of Officers. The Local Council or the General Membership may petition to remove an Officer from the Local Council in the event that the member is unable or unwilling to perform their duties. A petition to recall one or more Officers, signed by 51% of the Local Council or no less than thirty (30) percent or fifty (50) members of the General Membership, whichever lower, should be presented to the Local Council for validation so they may give notice of not less than 15 days to the General Membership. The General Membership will then be required to vote on this question at their next meeting. Removal of a Local Council member requires a fifty-one percent majority vote by the General Membership with a minimum 20% quorum. If that meeting fails to reach quorum, the Local Council may vote for termination by a three quarters vote. Grounds for termination include but are not limited to:

1. Missing more than two Local Council meetings without an acceptable excuse; or

2. Gross incompetence, witting mismanagement of funds, consistently acting or encouraging action in contravention of the best interests of the organization.

The Local Council must notify the Officer in writing of the termination and they may request to appeal the decision at the next general membership meeting. Reinstatement of a terminated Officer requires a two-thirds vote at a general membership meeting.

Section 10: Treasurer Trustees. Two trustees shall preside over the General Funds, in cooperation with the Treasurer. Trustees shall oversee Treasurer activities, and report any irregularities directly to the Local Council. Trustees shall be responsible for co-authoring the annual financial report to the annual convention along with the Treasurer.

Article 6: Committees

Section 1: Formation. Committees shall be formed by the General Meeting, Special Meeting, or the Convention to address a specific operational need. Any proposed Committee will produce a Written Statement of Purpose, which will prescribe the Committee's activities, and must be signed by at least ten (10) New Orleans DSA members.

Section 2: Function, Responsibilities, and Bylaws. Each Committee shall be responsible for its own activities. To this end, each Committee shall produce Bylaws and appoint a committee steward within three (3) months after official status was granted to the Committee. The Local Council must approve committee bylaws by a simple majority vote.

Each Committee is responsible for:

1. Carrying out the program of the Committee as prescribed by the Written Statement of Purpose.
2. Committee leadership is also responsible for regularly reporting their activities to the General Meeting.
3. Each committee is responsible for maintaining their own funds and fundraising activities in accordance with Committee Bylaws, the mission of their Written Statement of Purpose, and at the discretion of the Chapter Treasurer and Local Council.

Section 3: Dissolution. The General Meeting shall dismiss any Committee by a two-thirds majority vote.

Article 7: 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 less than five members in good standing sign a mission statement that includes the name and purpose of the Caucus. The Local Secretary will be responsible for ensuring proper recognition.

Article 8: Delegates

Section 1: Election. Delegates to National, Regional, and State bodies shall be elected by the General Membership at the General Meeting most immediately preceding the Convention or other gathering at which delegates are needed. The delegate election process will conform to DSA National bylaws and the National Convention calendar.

Article 9: Dues

Section 1: Authorization. Pursuant to Article II, Section 5 of the National DSA Constitution, the Local may institute, change, or abolish voluntary Local Dues by a majority vote of the Membership at a General Membership meeting.

Article 10: Amendments

Section 1. The bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of members in good standing at an annual Convention. They may also be amended if a Special Meeting is called according to the procedures outlined in Article 2, Section 3.

Section 2. Any member of New Orleans DSA may propose Amendments.

Section 3. The Local Council shall also put forward to the next General Meeting Amendments proposed and endorsed by no fewer than twenty members or 10% of membership, whichever is lower.

Article 11: Rules of Order

Section 1: Majority Vote. Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, decisions are made by a simple majority vote (“50% plus one”).

Section 2: Rules for Meetings. The Local Council and other official bodies may operate by Robert’s Rules of Order, or by Progressive Stack, or by a different set of rules. Members of a voting body may decide by a simple majority vote to adopt rules for their body or for the duration of any specific meeting.

Section 3: General Principles. The New Orleans Local values the voices of all members. Facilitators and leaders of all official and unofficial gatherings will seek to balance the participation and voices so that all members have their voice heard at meetings and in the general operation of the Membership.