

# **Bylaws of the Northwest Ohio Local Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America**

Adopted 1/24/2019; approved by the NPC in the current form 2/21/2019

## ***Article I. Name.***

The name of the Local Chapter will be the Northwest Ohio Local Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). DSA is a not-for-profit corporation.

## ***Article II. Purpose.***

The Northwest Ohio Local Chapter 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 capitalism, an economic order based on oppression, private profit, alienated labor, gross inequalities of wealth and power, discrimination based on race, gender, disability or sexual orientation, and brutality and violence in defense of the status quo.

DSA envisions a humane social order based on popular control of resources, production, and 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 on the stolen land we now know as 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 Northwest Ohio Local Chapter of DSA will be those individuals whose dues to National DSA are paid in full, who reside and/or work in the Northwest Ohio area. Individuals may not be members of the Local Chapter without being members of National DSA.

It will be the responsibility of members to approve policies and guidelines for the operation of the Local Chapter, to elect the Local Chapter's Steering Committee, to elect

delegates to the national convention, to vote on matters related to local and national policy, to make recommendations on issues, policies, activities, and other matters to the National Political Committee of DSA, and to contribute toward the Local Chapter's goals as described in Article II.

## **Section 2. Removal of Members.**

If a member in good standing 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, if they are found to have violated the Local Chapter's Code of Conduct, or if they are found to be under the discipline of any democratic centralist organization, the Local Chapter may vote to suspend, as defined in the Code of Conduct, or expel them from the Local Chapter of 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 Chapter Steering Committee, which will set the date of a Local Chapter 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 (2) weeks before that meeting takes place, as well as an opportunity to speak before members prior to a determining vote. Suspension or expulsion of a member requires a two-thirds vote of a General, Regular or Special Meeting. A suspended or expelled member in good standing may appeal to the National Political Committee of DSA.

## **Section 3. Voluntary Donations.**

As mandated by the national Constitution and Bylaws, the Local Chapter may establish a Local Chapter pledge system of voluntary donations for its members. The payment of a Local Chapter donation may not be a requirement for voting or for holding Local Chapter office.

Members may not face retaliatory action for the nonpayment of donations or preferential treatment for paying local donations. Donations shall be kept anonymous to the greatest practical extent.

## **Section 4. Privacy concerns.**

Care will be taken to protect the privacy of each member's contact information. The names of the Steering Committee members will be made available to the public. Protected information includes member email addresses, phone numbers, and mailing or physical addresses. Protected information may only be shared to members outside the Steering Committee on a need-to-know basis to facilitate communication to members. Anyone with access to protected information must agree to use it only to further goals of the local chapter.

## ***Article IV. Local Chapter Meetings.***

### **Section 1. General Meeting.**

The Local Chapter will hold one (1) General Meeting annually, at a date, time, and location agreed upon by the Steering Committee within 1 month of the anniversary of the prior General Meeting. At least fourteen (14) days before the General Meeting, all members of the Local Chapter will be sent notice of and an agenda for the General Meeting. Notice may be sent by

electronic means, but individuals who have not provided an email address must be sent a paper copy. The General Meeting will elect ~~the Local Chapter officers~~ **Steering Committee**, receive reports of the activities of the Local Chapter, set the political direction and policies of the chapter and its programming for the coming year, and may adopt an annual budget. The General Meeting shall be considered the "Annual Meeting" where local or state law may require such and may coincide with a Regular Meeting.

## **Section 2. Regular Meetings.**

The Local Chapter will hold Regular Meetings at least four (4) times annually, the time and place of which will be set in a schedule published and distributed by the Local Chapter Steering Committee. The Regular Meetings will set Local Chapter policy and work priorities and will include political discussion or education sessions. The Local Chapter Steering Committee will propose the agenda for Regular Meetings.

## **Section 3. Special Meetings.**

The Local Chapter Steering Committee may call a Special Meeting of the Local Chapter on at least three (3) days' notice when an urgent and important matter requires deliberation. No matters other than those listed in the meeting notice may be brought to or raised from the floor at a Special Meeting.

## **Section 4. Quorum.**

A quorum of 10 percent of the members, but not fewer than six persons is required for General, Regular, and Special Meetings to transact business. Should a meeting fail to meet quorum in two consecutive occasions, the Steering Committee shall be permitted to modify this formulation, but may not reduce the quorum to fewer than six members.

## **Section 5. Accessibility.**

Members may participate in Meetings by or through the use of, any means of communication allowing all participants to simultaneously or sequentially communicate with one other, such as teleconference, video-conference, or other available technology. This includes voice votes. Any participant in a Meeting by such means shall be deemed present in person at such meeting.

Proxy voting and online voting may be permitted by procedures approved at a General or Regular Meeting.

## **Section 6. Decision-Making Authority.**

The membership, meeting in a General, Regular or Special Meeting, shall constitute the highest decision-making body of the Local Chapter. All decisions, policies, agendas, statements, and other items of business decided at these Meetings are binding over any other body of the Local Chapter. Meetings may overturn the decisions of prior Meetings, but no other body may.

## ***Article V. Local Chapter Officers: Powers and Duties.***

## **Section 1. Officers and Terms.**

The officers of the Local Chapter will be two Co-Chairs, Secretary, Treasurer and Social Media Coordinator. The term of office will be one (1) year and will run from their election until the next General Meeting, or their resignation or removal as described in Article X. Officers are eligible for re-election.

## **Section 2. Vacancies.**

In the event of a vacancy in any Local Chapter office, a special election for the remainder of the vacant member's term shall be triggered within thirty (30) days after the opening of the vacancy if regular elections are not to be held within sixty (60) days of the vacancy. Special elections may coincide with a Regular Meeting. Special elections shall follow the same procedures as regular elections as described in Article X.

## **Section 3. Co-Chairs.**

The Co-Chairs will be the chief executive officers of the Local Chapter. They will preside over Local Chapter 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 11<sup>th</sup> Edition*. The Co-Chairs will be the official public spokespersons for the Local Chapter and will facilitate such actions and policies as the Local Chapter's general welfare may demand.

The Co-Chairs will be responsible also for coordinating the day-to-day operations and political work of the Local Chapter's branches and committees.

The Co-Chairs will report to Local Chapter Regular 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.

The Co-Chairs must not both be cis men. Should only cis men be nominated for Co-Chair, one of the positions will be held open, and may be filled by a special election of an eligible member.

## **Section 4. Secretary.**

The Secretary will be responsible for answering all correspondence and queries of the Local Chapter, for maintaining an up-to-date membership list of the Local Chapter, distributing copies of minutes and agendas to each Steering Committee member, and maintenance of corporate records. They will ensure effective communication with national DSA. They will temporarily assume the responsibilities of the Co-Chair if neither Co-Chair is able to do so.

The Secretary will be responsible also for the taking of minutes of all Local Chapter and Steering Committee Meetings and making copies available to members promptly. They shall have custody of these documents, and of the resolutions, reports and other official records of the Local Chapter, and shall transfer official records in good condition to their successor. Official records will include minutes of General, Regular and Special Meetings and Steering Committee Meetings, member lists, and all other documentation necessary to for the continued operation of the Local Chapter.

## **Section 5. Treasurer.**

The Treasurer will be responsible for the funds and financial records of the Local Chapter. All funds collected by the Local Chapter will be turned over to the Treasurer, who will deposit them in a bank account under the name of the Local Chapter. In cooperation with the Secretary, the Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring that membership dues are paid up-to-date. The Treasurer will chair a Finance Committee if one is established; will prepare the annual Local Chapter budget and deliver the Local Chapter financial report to the General Meeting of the Local Chapter, as well as periodic progress reports as requested by the Steering Committee of the Local Chapter.

## **Section 6. Social Media Coordinator.**

The Social Media Coordinator will be responsible for managing the social media communications of the local Chapter.

## **Section 7. Additional Duties.**

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

## **~~Section 8. Diversity.~~**

~~No more than two (2) of the officers may be white cis-men and at least two (2) officers must be people of color. If the elected officers of the Local Chapter do not meet these requirements, the membership shall nominate and elect additional members to the Steering Committee. For the purpose of determining eligibility for any office or other position within the Local Chapter, self-identification shall be the only acceptable means of determining a member's gender or race.~~

## ***Article VI. Steering Committee.***

### **Section 1. Composition.**

The Local Chapter Steering Committee will be composed of the officers of the Local Chapter, **two (2) additional members**, and the chair(s) of any Local Chapter branches **and YDSA chapters in our Local Chapters jurisdiction**.

### **Section 2. Duties.**

The Steering Committee administers the affairs of the Local Chapter and oversees the implementation of the decisions of the General, Regular and Special Meeting. Meetings and shall prepare an agenda proposal for each Meeting. It will have the power to receive reports of any committee or Branch and advise thereon, to call Special Meetings of the Local Chapter, and to act on any matter that requires immediate and urgent action. The Steering Committee is the

highest decision-making body of the Local Chapter between Meetings and is subordinate to the general membership.

The Local Chapter 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 members in good standing of DSA, and for acting on the organization's behalf between Local Chapter meetings.

### **Section 3. Meetings.**

The meetings of the Steering Committee will be held at the call of one (1) of the Co-Chairs at such intervals as may be determined by a prior Steering Committee Meeting or by consultation with any three (3) members of the Steering Committee. All members of the Steering Committee must (ordinarily) be given four (4) days oral, written, or electronic notice of regular Steering Committee Meetings; a 24-hour notice may be given under special emergency circumstances.

Notice requirements may be waived only by unanimous approval of the Steering Committee. Steering Committee Meetings may be held electronically or by telephone or by any means acceptable to all the members of the Steering Committee. Any member of the Local Chapter in good standing may observe meetings of the Steering Committee and the Steering Committee shall allow for a question and answer period and a comment period. However, the Steering Committee may hold executive sessions if 60% of its members vote to do so in order to discuss member discipline or security matters.

The Steering Committee may govern itself through any reasonable decision-making process. When there is a dispute over how decisions shall be made, *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 11th Edition* shall govern.

### **Section 4. Quorum.**

A quorum of a simple majority, including at least ~~three (3) of the five (5) officers~~ **four(4) of the seven (7) members of the Steering Committee**, is required for the transaction of Steering Committee business. If there is not a quorum, a provisional vote may be taken of those present; those absent may vote later by email.

### **Section 5. Board of Directors.**

For the purposes of meeting the requirements of local and state incorporation laws, the Chapter shall have a "Board of Directors" consisting of members of the Steering Committee assigned for the purpose as logical and required by law. (For example, if the law requires a "Secretary" then the Chapter's Communications Facilitator is a logical fit.) ~~Officers~~ **Members** of the Steering Committee so appointed do not gain any new or additional powers or responsibilities except those strictly required by law.

### **Section 6. Diversity.**

**No more than three (3) members of the Steering Committee may be white cis-men and at least three (3) members of the Steering Committee must be people of color. If the elected officers of the Local Chapter do not meet these requirements, the membership shall nominate**

**and elect additional members to the Steering Committee. For the purpose of determining eligibility for any office or other position within the Local Chapter, self-identification shall be the only acceptable means of determining a member's gender or race.**

## ***Article VII. Branches.***

### **Section 1. Definition.**

A Branch is a subgroup of the Local Chapter consisting of at least five (5) members in good standing with national DSA. Branches may be defined by geography, membership in an institution, or language. The chair of each Branch will hold membership on the Steering Committee. Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) chapters within the geographic area defined by a DSA Local Chapter may affiliate as a Branch of that Local Chapter, in which case the local YDSA chapter may send a representative to the Local Chapter Steering Committee.

### **Section 2. Formation.**

Any group of at least five (5) Members of the Local Chapter, in good standing, may request to be recognized as a Branch. They must apply to the Steering Committee in writing. Their application must include the names of its members; a description of purposes, functions, and membership criteria; and any other information deemed necessary by the Steering Committee. A majority vote of the general membership at a Meeting shall be required to establish a Branch. Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) chapters need only show proof of being an officially recognized chapter of YDSA as part of a generic request to be recognized as a Branch of the Local Chapter, subject to approval by a majority vote of the general membership at a Meeting. Sections 3 and 4 below shall not be required of YDSA chapter-Branches.

### **Section 3. Structure, Membership, and Elections**

Each Branch shall have its own bylaws explicitly defining its purpose, functions, and membership criteria in detail. Such bylaws may establish the Branch's methods and structures as long as they do not violate these bylaws or the constitution and bylaws of national DSA. Each Branch shall be responsible for electing its leadership and Steering Committee representation. Branch leaders shall be responsible for scheduling and organizing meetings and actions of their Branch. In the event of a vacancy of a Branch leader or Steering Committee representative, the Branch may vote to elect new leadership or Steering Committee representation. Each Branch shall maintain an official membership list.

### **Section 4. Dissolution.**

A Branch may have its status revoked by a majority vote of the membership at a Meeting. A Branch may also choose to dissolve itself by means specified in its Branch Bylaws. In the event that a Branch chooses to split into several new Branches, each new Branch must apply for membership through the same method as creating any Branch, although the Steering Committee may choose to waive requirements for certain documentation if it is identical to the prior or parent Branch.



## ***Article VIII. Committees.***

### **Section 1. Committee Formation.**

The Local Chapter may form Standing Committees, Ad Hoc Committees or Working Groups. Committees or Working Groups may be established by a vote of members in good standing at a General Meeting, Regular Meeting or Special Meeting of the Local Chapter. Committees and Working Groups may be dissolved in an identical manner.

### **Section 2. Membership and Election of Committee Leadership.**

Membership in a Committee or Working Group shall be open to all Local Chapter members in good standing. Each committee may, by a democratic vote of Committee or Working Group members, determine its leadership structure. Committees should operate in a democratic manner. However, each Committee or Working Group must designate one (1) Chair or multiple Co-Chairs to serve as a point of contact with Local Chapter Steering Committee

### **Section 3. Duties and Responsibilities.**

The members of a committee are responsible for executing their respective body's strategy in fulfillment of its objectives. Chairs or Co-Chairs are responsible for organizing their respective body's members, running meetings, acting as liaisons to the Steering Committee, and serving as the committee's points of contact to the membership. Committees must keep official records of meeting dates, attendance, and meeting notes, which must be made available to the membership.

When a committee's proposed activities relate to the mission of another committee, the chair or co-chairs of that committee shall be notified. Should a dispute arise between two or more committees that cannot be resolved between them, it shall be resolved at a Meeting.

Committees shall report on their activities to the membership at the General Meeting or more frequently at Regular or Special Meetings as necessary. Committees shall report on activity to the Steering Committee upon request.

## ***Article IX. Delegates and Nominees to National, Regional, and State Bodies.***

### **Section 1. Convention.**

Local Chapter delegates and alternates to the National Convention, as well as to any regional or state bodies of DSA will be elected by members in good standing of the Local Chapter of DSA. Elections for the National Convention delegation, as well as any regional or state bodies, will be held on the schedule announced by the national, regional, or state bodies.

### **Section 2. Method of Voting.**

Following Article V, Section 5 of national DSA's Constitution, delegates to the National Convention must be elected by secret ballot. Following Article VI, Section 3, of national DSA's Bylaws, Local Chapters "may determine their own method of election of delegates to the Convention except that a petition from 10% of a Local's membership or a motion supported by



15% of those present and voting at the Local meeting which determines the method of election will require the use of the Hare system in that Local's election of delegates to the National Convention."

## ***Article X. Elections, Nominations and Recalls.***

### **Section 1. Nominations Committee.**

A three (3) person Nominations Committee will be established at least one (1) month prior to every election by vote of a Regular Meeting. It will solicit and receive nominations for the positions to be elected.

### **Section 2. Nominations Process.**

Nominations for Local Chapter officers, Steering Committee members, and delegates to the National Convention will be opened at least 10 days before an election. The call for nominations will be announced to all Local Chapter members in good standing as soon as nominations are open. A member must receive at least two (2) nominations in order to run for office.

### **Section 3. Elections Process.**

Elections shall be held in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 11th Edition*.

### **Section 4. Recall.**

#### **Section 4. Recall.**

Any ~~officer~~ member of the Steering Committee of Local Chapter of DSA may be recalled for malfeasance or failure to fulfill their duties or obligations as an officer. In order to recall or remove ~~an officer~~ a member of the Steering Committee, at least 10% of the membership shall submit petitions, letters, emails or other written request to remove said ~~officer~~ member of the Steering Committee to the Local Chapter Steering Committee, which will set a date of a Local Chapter meeting for deliberation on the accused's ~~officer~~ removal. The ~~officer~~ member of the Steering Committee in question must receive written documentation of the specific reasons for the removal request and notice of the meeting a minimum of two weeks before the meeting takes place. The accused ~~officer~~ member of the Steering Committee will be given a chance to speak in their own defense at this meeting. Removal of ~~officer~~ a member of the Steering Committee requires a simple majority the members in good standing at the Local Chapter meeting.

## ***Article XI. Code of Conduct.***

The Local Chapter will establish, by vote of a General Meeting or Regular Meeting, a Code of Conduct that outlines the boundaries of acceptable behavior by members of the Local

Chapter and describes options for censure of members, including suspension or expulsion. The Code of Conduct shall be made available to all members of the Local Chapter. Amendments to the Code of Conduct must be approved at a General or Regular Meeting.

### ***Article XII. Amendments.***

Proposed amendments to these Bylaws must be made by written resolution, endorsed by five (5) members of the Local Chapter, and submitted to the Steering Committee at least one (1) month in advance of a General or Regular Meeting. The Steering Committee is required to provide the Local Chapter membership with at least two (2) weeks written or electronic notice of the proposed amendments. The amendment must be approved by a 2/3 majority vote of a General or Regular Meeting.

### ***Article XIII. Rules of the Local Chapter.***

#### **Section 1. Rules.**

The Rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 11th Edition* will govern this Local Chapter 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, Newly Revised, 11th Edition* upon the request of a member.

#### **Section 2. Action Out of Order.**

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

#### **Section 3. Harassment Policy.**

The Local Chapter will follow the Harassment Policy of National DSA.

### ***Article XIV. Distribution of Assets.***

Upon dissolution of the organization, any residual assets shall become property of the national organization of Democratic Socialists of America.

### ***Article XV. Prohibited Activity.***

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

### ***Certification.***

These bylaws were approved by a majority of the Local Chapter's membership on January 24, 2019.

