

Bylaws of the Democratic Socialists of America, Asheville, NC Local Chapter

Approved June 15, 2017

Amended February 18, 2018

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ARTICLE I. Name.

The name of the Local Chapter shall be the Asheville, North Carolina Local Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, a not-for-profit corporation, hereafter referred to as “the Local Chapter”, “Asheville DSA”, or “AVLDSA”.

ARTICLE II. Purpose.

The Asheville, North Carolina 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 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 Asheville, North Carolina Local Chapter DSA will be those individuals whose dues to national DSA are paid in full, who reside and/or work in Buncombe, Transylvania, Madison, Haywood and/or Henderson counties. It will be the responsibility of all AVLDSA members in good standing to approve policies and guidelines for the operation of the Local Chapter, vote on the election of AVLDSA delegates to national DSA bodies and AVLDSA officers, and make recommendations on issues and other matters to the National Political Committee of DSA. Members may stand for AVLDSA office.

Section 2. Removal of Members

If a member is found to be overtly hostile to the purpose of The Local Chapter as defined in the Purpose; if they are found to be consistently engaging in undemocratic, disruptive, or abusive behavior or harassing other AVLDSA members; if they are found to be under the discipline of any self-defined democratic centralist organization: The Local Chapter may vote to expel them from AVLDSA. In order for such a finding to be made, any AVLDSA member must formally proffer written charges against the member in question to the Steering Committee of AVLDSA, which shall set the date of a Regular 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 requires a two-thirds vote of the Regular Meeting. An expelled member in good standing may appeal to the National Political Committee of DSA.

Section 3. Pledges.

The Local Chapter may establish a Local Chapter pledge system of voluntary donations for its members for the purpose of establishing consistent voting quorums, to assist low-income members with national dues membership, and to pay for administrative costs associated with meetings and political education events. The payment of a donation may not be a requirement for voting or holding Local Chapter office.

ARTICLE IV. Local Chapter Meetings.

Section 1. General Meeting.

The Local Chapter will hold a minimum of one (1) General Meeting annually, and all members of the Local will receive three (3) weeks written (or electronic mail) notice and an agenda of the General Meeting. The General Meeting may adopt an annual budget and, on alternating years, elect officers. Notice may be sent by electronic means, but individuals who have not provided an email address must be sent a paper copy. The Steering Committee shall set the agenda for General Meetings, with input provided by any members who wish to do so. In general, it is the highest legislative body of the Local Chapter. The General Meeting may coincide with a Regular Meeting.

Section 2. Regular Meetings.

The Local Chapter 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 Chapter Steering Committee. The Regular Meetings will set Local Chapter policy and work priorities, and they will include political education sessions. The Local Steering Committee will set the agenda for Regular Meetings. In general, the Regular Meeting is the operating legislative body of the Local Chapter.

Section 3. Special Meetings.

The Local Chapter Steering Committee may call a Special Meeting of the Local Chapter on five (5) days' notice when an urgent and important matter requires deliberation.

Section 4. Quorum.

A quorum of 20 percent of the members of the Local Chapter (but not fewer than six (6) persons) is required for General, Regular, or Special Meetings to transact business.

ARTICLE V. Parliamentary Authority

The current edition of The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure governs this organization in all parliamentary situations that are not provided for in the law or in its charter, bylaws, or adopted rules.

ARTICLE VI. Local Chapter Officers: Powers and Duties.

Section 1. Officers

The officers of the Local Chapter will be two Co-Chairs, Secretary, and Treasurer. At least one officer must not be a cis male.

Section 2. Co-Chairs.

- a) 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. The Co-Chairs will be the official public spokesperson for the Local Chapter and will initiate such actions and policies as the Local Chapter's general welfare may demand. In the event that one or both Co-Chairs are unable to perform their duties for a single event or a longer period of time, the Secretary 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 Chapter's branches and committees.
- c) The Co-Chairs will report to Local Chapter's 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.
- d) The Co-Chairs may divide their labor and responsibilities in whatever way they see fit. In the event the Co-Chairs are unable to agree on this division, the Steering Committee may mediate this disagreement amicably, or vote on a mandated division of responsibilities at its next meeting where both Co-Chairs are present.

Section 3. Secretary.

- a) The Secretary will be responsible for answering all correspondence and queries of the Local Chapter, and for maintaining an up-to-date membership list of the Local Chapter and ensuring the security and confidentiality of its members. They will ensure effective communication with the national DSA.
- b) The Secretary will be responsible also for the taking of minutes of all Local Chapter and Steering Committee Meetings, and shall have custody of these minutes, and the resolutions, reports and other official records of The Local Chapter. They shall transfer official records in good condition to their successor. Official records shall include meeting minutes and member lists.

Section 4. Treasurer.

- a) The Treasurer will be responsible for the funds and financial records of the Local Chapter and will ensure the security and confidentiality of those records. All funds collected by the Local Chapter will be turned over to the Treasurer, who shall 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.
- b) The Treasurer 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 5. Additional Duties.

The 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.

ARTICLE VII. Steering Committee.

Section 1. Composition.

The Trustees of the Steering Committee will be composed of eight (8) elected members including the officers of the Local Chapter. The chair(s) of any Local Chapter Youth Sections and any Local Chapter Branches will also become voting members of the Steering Committee. The initial members of the Steering Committee will be the members of the Organizing Committee, and upon ratification of these Bylaws by the members of the Local Chapter and approval by DSA National, nomination for AVLDSA Officers and Trustees shall be opened at least ten (10) days and an election will be held at the following Regular Meeting.

Section 2. Duties.

- a) The Steering Committee administers the affairs of the Local Chapter 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 Special meetings of the Local Chapter, and to act on any matter that requires immediate and urgent action. The Steering Committee is the regular executive body of the Local, and thus subordinate to its Legislative bodies, the General and Regular Meetings.
- b) The 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 of the Local Chapter in good standing, 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 the Co-Chairs at such intervals as may be determined by a prior Steering Committee Meeting or by consultation with enough members of the Steering Committee to make a quorum. All members of the Steering Committee must (ordinarily) be given four (4) 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 the Steering Committee will be half of the committee, rounded down, at least one of whom is an officer of the Local Chapter. A quorum is required for the transaction of Steering Committee business.

Section 5. Minutes.

Minutes of all Steering Committee Meetings, Regular Meetings, and the General Meeting are emailed automatically to all members of the Steering Committee. Copies of meeting minutes are available to any member upon request and are available for inspection at any regularly scheduled Steering Committee Meeting, Regular Meeting, or General Meeting of AVLDSA.

Section 6. Vacancies.

Any officer may be removed by the Steering Committee for violation of the articles or bylaws of The Local Chapter or for conduct prejudicial to the best interest of AVLDSA. Should any member of the Steering Committee miss three (3) or more consecutive meetings, the Steering Committee may declare that position vacant. It must notify said member of its intention to vacate their position prior to the meeting at which such action will be voted on. In the event of a vacancy, the vacancy shall be filled by a special election; alternatively, an acting successor may be appointed by the Co-Chairs until a new officer is elected at the next regularly scheduled Regular Meeting or a Regular Meeting specially called for that purpose.

ARTICLE VIII. Nominations, Elections and Recalls

Section 1. Nominations Process

Nominations for AVLDSA officers and trustees shall be at least opened ten (10) days before and closed at the annual General Meeting. The call for nominations shall be announced to members in good standing of AVLDSA in advance of the General Meeting, and nominees will be encouraged to provide a brief statement of their qualifications before the meeting. Nominations may be made by any member of the Local Chapter in good standing.

Nominations for delegates to the National Convention shall be opened at least ten (10) days prior to the next Regular Meeting following announcement of location/dates by National. Nominations may be made by any member of the Local Chapter in good standing.

Section 2. Uncontested Positions

If a position is uncontested, the nominee will be declared elected by acclamation. Nominees are free to decline nominations.

Section 3. Contested Positions

Elections for contested positions shall be decided by secret ballot. If there are only two nominees for a position, then a simple majority of legal votes cast is sufficient to elect the nominee. If there are three or more nominees for a single position, the election shall be by approval voting. Multiple seat contested elections, such as for the non-officer Trustees of the SC, shall be elected by a single approval vote, with the highest scoring candidates selected.

Section 4. Terms.

The term of office will be one year, and shall run from March to February or until their successors are elected.

Section 5. Vacancies.

In the event of a vacancy in the office of a Co-Chair, the Secretary will assume that office and vacate the office of Secretary. In the event of a vacancy in any other Local Chapter office, the Steering Committee will appoint a replacement for the remainder of the term.

Section 6. Recalls.

Any officer or trustee may be recalled for nonfeasance or malfeasance by a two-thirds vote of all members of the Local Chapter.

ARTICLE IX. 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, work site, constituency (e.g., labor, minority, feminist), or area of political work (e.g., peace action, environmental movement). Branches must be created or approved by the Steering Committee. The chairs of Branches will hold membership on the Steering Committee.

Section 2. Youth Sections.

Branches established on college campuses and consisting of students will be called Local Chapter Youth Sections. Youth Sections must have at least five (5) members in good standing with national DSA. The chairs of Local Chapter Youth Sections will hold membership on the Steering Committee.

ARTICLE X. Committees.

Section 1. Standing Committees

A standing committee is a subgroup of the Local Chapter consisting of at least two (2) members of the Local Chapter in good standing. A standing committee represents a (permanent) division of labor within the chapter.

Section 2. Ad-hoc Committees.

Ad Hoc Committees may be established by a vote of members at a Regular Meeting of the Local Chapter. Ad Hoc Committees must be created with an explicit duration, which may be extended.

Section 3. Duties.

Chairs of Committees will keep the Steering Committee and the Regular Meetings of the Local Chapter informed on the activities of the committee.

ARTICLE XI. Judicial Committee

In the event of a violation of the bylaws or standing rules, an ad hoc Judicial Committee (abbreviated JC or Judicial Committee) of two members of the Steering Committee and two members at large, none of whom are involved in the violation, shall be called to investigate and determine the nature of the violation, and assign restorative action with the consent of the members accused of the violation. In the event that a common agreement cannot be reached as to the nature of the violation and the appropriate restorative action, the JC shall refer the matter to the next Regular Meeting of the membership for consideration and action. A violation may be addressed at any Regular or Special Meeting directly if it occurs concurrent with the violation or before the JC can be convened. Restorative actions assigned by the JC are in lieu of consideration of expulsion and must not exceed this penalty.

ARTICLE XII. Statements.

Section 1. At-Large Statements

Any public statement, release, or quote attributable to the Asheville DSA as a single entity must be proposed and approved in a Meeting at which there is a quorum. Such At-Large Statements may only be rescinded by proposal and vote in a Meeting at which there is a quorum.

Section 2. Steering Committee Statements

Any public statement, release, or quote attributable to the AVLDSA Steering Committee as an entity must be proposed and approved in a Steering Committee Meeting at which there is a quorum. Such Steering Committee Statements are subject to ratification or amendment by the membership at the next membership meeting or the next General Meeting.

Section 3. Officer Statements

Any public statement, release, or quote attributable to an individual officer of the AVLDSA speaking as such must be made attributable also to their office title. Such Officer Statements may be subject to ratification or amendment by the membership at the next membership meeting or the next General Meeting.

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

Local Chapter delegates and alternates to the National Convention, or other National, Regional, or State bodies, will be elected by members of the Local Chapter in good standing with national DSA. Elections for the National Convention delegation shall be held on the schedule announced by the national organization.

ARTICLE XIV. Prohibited Activity

The Asheville DSA Local Chapter shall not engage in activity prohibited by the IRS guidelines established for 501(c)(4) organizations or similar rules established by the state of North Carolina. Nor shall the Local Chapter engage in any activity prohibited by resolutions adopted by DSA's National Convention or DSA's National Political Committee, or local, state or federal law.

ARTICLE XV. Amendments.

Section 1. Notice of Proposed Amendments.

Any member wishing to amend these bylaws must submit such draft amendments to the AVLDSA Steering Committee at least twenty-one (21) days in advance of a regularly scheduled Regular Meeting or General Meeting. The Steering Committee or an ad-hoc body appointed by the Steering Committee shall review any such amendments and ensure that the discussion and vote upon such amendments are listed on the agenda of the Regular Meeting or General Meeting. The agenda is provided to the membership fourteen (14) days in advance of the meeting, which will serve to notify the membership that bylaws amendments have been submitted for consideration.

Section 2. Vote.

These bylaws may be amended, repealed, or altered in whole or in part by a simple majority vote of any General Meeting or Regular Meeting at which there is a quorum, and the appropriate notice has been provided. Alterations to the amendment proposed are permitted provided they are not hostile to the published intent.

Section 3. Notification of Changes in Bylaws.

AVLDSA members must be notified within twenty-one (21) days of any changes to these bylaws. This may be done by emailing of meeting minutes or by emailing of revised bylaws, or by contacting members by other means as requested.

ARTICLE XVI. Policies and Procedures

Section 1. Additional Governing Documents

The Steering committee as well as the general membership at a Regular Meeting may enact policies, procedures, and standing rules for the operation of the Local Chapter, where the general membership's resolutions supercede those of the Steering Committee. The Secretary shall keep a record of all such resolutions and make it available for all members to access via electronic means.

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. Diversity.

The Local Chapter shall strive for diversity of both membership and its governing body. Our goal is that at least two (2) of the eight (8) Steering Committee Trustees will be a woman, a gender nonconforming person, or belong to a racial minority, and at least one of the eight will be a man, a gender nonconforming person, or belong to a racial minority.

ARTICLE XVII. Dissolution

In the event of the dissolution of the Local Chapter, any residual assets shall become property of the national organization of Democratic Socialists of America.