

Bylaws of the Austin Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America

Last amended January 26th, 2019. Non Substantive Changes made on February 12th, 2019.

Article 1 Name

The name of the organization will be the Austin Democratic Socialists of America, also referred to as Austin DSA, ATXDSA, or the Austin chapter of Democratic Socialists of America.

Article 2 Purpose

The purpose of Austin DSA will be consistent with that of the national organization of Democratic Socialists of America.

We are socialists because we reject an economic order based on private profit, alienated labor, gross inequalities of wealth and power, discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability status, age, religion, and national origin, and brutality and violence in defense of the status quo. We are socialists because we share a vision of a humane social order based on popular control of resources and production, economic planning, equitable distribution, feminism, racial equality and non-oppressive relationships. We are socialists because we are developing a concrete strategy for achieving that vision, for building a majority movement that will make democratic socialism a reality in America. We believe that such a strategy must acknowledge the class structure of American society and that 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 3. Membership

Section 3.1 Membership

Members of Austin DSA will be those individuals whose dues to national DSA are paid in full, who reside and/or work in the Central Texas area. It will be the responsibility of members to approve policies and guidelines for the operation of the Austin DSA, 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 3.2 Dues

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

Article 4 Chapter Meetings

Section 4.1 General Meeting

The Austin DSA Chapter will have monthly meetings every month if at all possible. Quorum at monthly general body meetings shall be the number of members present in the hall. The chapter may choose, by majority vote at a general meeting, to increase or decrease the frequency of the general meetings without amending these bylaws.

Section 4.2 Special Meetings

In addition to the regular general meetings, Austin DSA can elect to have occasional special meetings when necessary to deal with pressing chapter business that cannot be effectively handled within the context of a general body meeting. Special meetings must be called and run in accordance with the following provisions:

4.2.1 The Leadership Committee can, at any time, call a special meeting by a two-thirds vote.

4.2.2 The general body can, at a regular general body meeting, call a special meeting by a two-thirds vote.

4.2.3 The scope of special meetings will be limited to the specific topic or topics named in the call for the meeting. At a special meeting, no business can be disposed of, and no decisions made, that aren't directly related to the specific subjects or issues.

4.2.4 Special meetings shall be chaired and have the agenda set by the co-chairs and Leadership Committee in the same fashion as regular general body meetings, except in the case of clear conflicts of interest, in which case the member who made the initial motion and the Leadership Committee shall agree on a neutral party to chair and set the agenda for the meeting.

4.2.5 To ensure that attendance of special meetings is broadly representative of the entire body of Austin DSA, quorum for a special meeting shall be a majority of the average attendance of members in good standing at the previous three general body meetings. Otherwise, a meeting can be held, but no decisions made during the meeting shall be binding on the chapter.

4.2.6 The date, time, and location of any special meeting shall be disseminated to the membership through all normal communication channels in use by the chapter at that time. At no time will a special meeting be held without 72 hours advance notice.

Article 5 Leadership Committee

Section 5.1 Members and Terms

5.1.1 The Leadership Committee of the Austin DSA Chapter shall be the Officers (these will be two Co-chairs, the Secretary, the Treasurer, the Communications Coordinator, and the Membership Coordinator), and any At-large members. All positions shall be elected annually at the chapter convention.

Members of the Leadership Committee shall serve one year, or until their successors are elected. The term of the Leadership Committee begins on the first day of the next month following the annual chapter convention.

5.1.2 In the time between the annual convention and the start of the next Leadership Committee term, the sitting leadership committee will be considered an interim body and will be prohibited from approving expenditures of chapter funds greater than \$500, outside of regular, recurring expenditures without prior approval of the general body.

5.1.3 Elections for the Leadership Committee will be held according to the rules set forth in Article 9 (Nominations and Elections) and Article 12 (Chapter Convention). All positions shall be elected at-large. The Officers and the At-large members are determined as follows:

5.1.3.1 The Nominations and Elections Committee shall tabulate the result of the contest and rank the candidates from most to least-approved-of or highest to lowest-scoring, according to the method selected by the membership.

5.1.3.2 The two-highest ranked candidates shall be offered Co-chair positions, however, at no time shall two men be Co-chairs. If the top two candidates both identify as male, then the male with the higher rank is offered a Co-chair position, and the highest ranking candidate who does not identify as male is offered the other Co-chair position. Should an elected candidate wish to decline the position, the next-highest ranked candidate will be offered the position until a member accepts and the diversity requirement is met.

5.1.3.3 The remaining Officers are determined by vote from within the Leadership Committee-elect. However, if the Leadership Committee determines that no one on the Leadership Committee is qualified to fill the Treasurer role, then the Treasurer role may be appointed from the general membership. At that point the appointee assumes the title, duties, and authorities of that Officer role but shall

not have a vote in Leadership Committee meetings, nor count towards meeting the diversity requirement defined below.

5.1.3.4 The remaining seated candidates not selected for an officer position become At-large members of the Leadership Committee.

Section 5.2 Diversity Requirements

5.2.1 No more than half of the Leadership Committee shall be men and at least five members must be people from traditionally marginalized groups, such as those based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, religion, nationality, etc., as self-identified.

5.2.2 In the event that the results of the election do not meet the diversity requirements as defined above, the Elections Committee and chapter Co-Chairs will determine who is seated on the Leadership Committee. Because candidates may fit into multiple categories named in the diversity requirements, there may arise times when multiple possible solutions exist to meet the diversity requirements. The chapter will use the following procedure to make sure the Leadership Committee meets the diversity requirements.

5.2.2.1 The Elections Committee will determine the number of spots by which the election results fall short of the various diversity requirements.

5.2.2.2 The Elections Committee will identify the highest scoring candidates who are part of the categories from the diversity requirements that are not reflected in the results of the election

5.2.2.3 The Elections Committee will identify the lowest scoring candidates within the top 11 who do not meet the categories from the diversity requirements.

5.2.2.4 The Elections Committee will identify a way of meeting the diversity requirements by unseating the fewest possible candidates within the top 11 and replacing them with the highest scoring candidates available who are part of the categories from the diversity requirements. The Elections Committee will present their decisions to the chapter co-chairs for verification.

5.2.2.5 If the chapter co-chairs and Elections Committee disagree on the proper way to meet the diversity requirements, the chapter will make a decision at the next scheduled general body meeting. The co-chairs and Elections Committee will each make recommendations to the chapter, who will vote on which to approve by secret ballot.

Section 5.3 Responsibilities and Quorum

5.3.1 The Leadership Committee shall meet as a whole at least once per month if possible (in person, by conference call, or electronically). Meetings shall be open to chapter members unless the committee goes into executive session to discuss sensitive financial or personal matters by two-thirds vote of the committee.

5.3.2 The Leadership Committee shall concern itself primarily with establishing program activities and proposing guidelines for consideration by the general membership, and may establish policies and procedures consistent with these bylaws and the chapter's priorities to do so.

5.3.3 The Leadership Committee shall be responsible for providing the organizational infrastructure required for the Chapter's meetings and for members to accomplish projects and tasks within working groups and committees.

5.3.4 The Leadership Committee is responsible for organizing efforts to satisfy DSA's priorities within Austin DSA's jurisdiction, as determined by the general membership.

5.3.5 The Leadership Committee shall be responsible for acting on the organization's behalf between the Annual Convention and General Meetings, and may establish standing rules to govern its activities.

5.3.6 Quorum for the Leadership Committee shall be at least seven members.

5.3.7 Should a member of the Leadership Committee request leave in writing, become incapacitated, or for whatever reason become unable to perform their duties as defined in this article, the committee may appoint a member in good standing to act for the absent elected member for a period not to exceed 60 days. Should the committee member not return to their elected position after 60 days have passed, the position shall be considered vacant and the acting member will continue to hold the position until an election for a permanent replacement can be held, per Section 5.10 of this article.

Section 5.4 The Co-Chairs

The Co-Chairs will be the executive officers of Austin DSA. They will preside over Austin DSA meetings. The Chairs will initiate such actions and policies as the Austin DSA's general welfare may demand and they and their designees will be the official public spokespeople for Austin DSA. The Co-Chairs will be responsible also for coordinating the day-to-day operations and political work of the Chapter's committees with their several chairs. The Co-Chairs will ensure effective communication with the National DSA.

Section 5.5 The Secretary

The Secretary shall be responsible for the minutes of Austin DSA meetings, including their maintenance and distribution to the membership, and will handle administrative tasks as directed by the Co-chairs or at the request of fellow Leadership Committee members.

They shall collect and distribute the contact information of Leadership Committee members to facilitate the business of the chapter.

Section 5.6. The Treasurer

The Treasurer shall, as directed by the Leadership Committee, have care and custody of the general funds, securities, properties, and assets of the chapter.

They shall prepare and present a financial report of the previous calendar year each January and may prepare and present additional financial reports at a frequency established by the Leadership Committee.

Section 5.7 Membership Coordinator

The Membership Coordinator shall ensure that records are kept of membership, both from membership rosters provided by the national DSA and from outreach of Austin DSA.

They shall be responsible for outreach and communication with new members, inquiries concerning membership or interest in Austin DSA, and any other tasks concerning growing, maintaining, or enhancing membership determined by the Leadership Committee or the Membership as a whole.

Section 5.8 Communications Coordinator

The Communications Coordinator shall be responsible for handling press inquiries, preparing press releases, and otherwise serving as the primary deputized spokesperson and media liaison for Austin DSA on behalf of the Co-chairs, and perform other duties related to external media and public outreach as assigned by the Co-chairs and fellow members of the Leadership Committee. They shall also establish procedures and coordinate external communications for committees, working groups, and members.

Section 5.9 At-Large Members

There shall be five At-Large Members of the Leadership Committee, who are elected to provide counsel and advice and complement the experience and diversity of the Leadership Committee.

At-Large Members may chair and serve on any committee required by the Leadership Committee or the Membership as a whole.

Section 5.10 Vacancies

All vacancies of Officers or members of the Leadership Committee, whether resulting from death, resignation or otherwise, may be temporarily filled through appointment by the Leadership Committee until a vote of the general membership can be held.

Section 5.11 Removal

Any Officer or member of the Leadership Committee may be removed by a two-thirds vote of the general membership. Any Officer or member of the Leadership Committee may resign in writing. An Officer may resign without ceding their place on the Leadership Committee.

Article 6 Committees

Section 6.1 Purpose

The Chapter will have Committees, when needed. The Committees will have co-chairs appointed by the Chapter co-chairs and then approved or replaced by committee members.

Section 6.2 Electoral Research Group

In of itself, the Electoral Research Group will be an exception to the general rules for committee creation, and as it is created directly by votes of the general body, will not have the need for signatures or other requirements, but will be subject to recall elections.

6.2.1 Committee Composition:

6.2.1.1 The Electoral Research Group shall consist of seven voting members.

6.2.1.2 Two committee positions are reserved for the chapter co-chairs *ex officio*.

6.2.1.3 The remaining five positions:

6.2.1.3.1 Are elected by a vote of the chapter's general body from a field of nominees;

6.2.1.3.2 Recognize the time commitment to be asked of them by the Committee;

6.2.1.3.3 Must be paid and current members of DSA.

6.2.1.3.4 At least three of the elected members must be people from traditionally marginalized groups, such as those based on race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, religion, nationality, etc., as self-identified. In this specific case, that includes those members who do not identify as men.

6.2.2 The Committee shall elect a chair, who is charged with coordinating the committee's activities and serving as point person when communicating with candidates.

6.2.3 The Committee's term shall be one year, with nominations taking place at the June General Meeting and elections taking place at the July General Meeting.

6.2.4 While members of the Electoral Research Group may end up participating in workgroups around particular campaigns, it will NOT be the case that the EC has presumptive authority over the field operations or messaging of said campaigns. Campaigns and logistics will be housed in workgroups established by the General Body or Leadership Committee

6.2.5 No member may serve on the Electoral Research Group during an election cycle in which they are running for public office. In the event that a committee member feels they may want to do so, they will inform the committee immediately, and a date for a snap election will be held for their seat will be held at the next GBM.

6.2.6 The election process for this group shall be as such:

6.2.6.1 Nominations for any contest shall be opened one month in advance of the election. Nominations can be taken up to the election including the election meeting.

6.2.6.2 Approval Voting: For all elections, the default voting method shall be approval voting where each voter may choose as many candidates as desired. The winner is the candidate chosen by the most voters.

6.2.6.3 Elections shall take place at a GBM or, if necessary, a special meeting wherein the votes are cast by secret ballot.

Article 7 Delegates to National, Regional, and State Bodies

Section 7.1 Convention

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.

Article 8 Rules and Prohibited Activity

Section 8.1 Rules.

The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Chapter in all cases which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the bylaws, special rules of order, and any procedures approved by the members of this Chapter.

Section 8.2 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists when a matter to be acted upon by the Chapter or the Leadership Committee confers a direct, substantial benefit to any Leadership Committee member. The Leadership Committee Member shall disclose the conflict in writing and it will be made public to the Chapter before the matter is discussed or voted on at a meeting. If the matter is before the Leadership Committee only it shall be made public there before any discussion or vote may proceed. Chairpeople of working groups and committees will be subject to the same Conflict of Interest disclosure requirements.

Section 8.3 National DSA Requirements

8.3.1 Members shall not engage in any activity prohibited by the National DSA Constitution, Bylaws, or Harassment Policy; or any resolutions adopted by the National Convention or National Political Committee; or these bylaws, or special rules of order, or other procedures adopted by this chapter.

8.3.2 Members shall not fail in their duties to perform any activity required of them by the National DSA Constitution, Bylaws, or Harassment Policy; or any resolutions adopted by the National Convention or National Political Committee; or these bylaws, or special rules of order, or other procedures adopted by this chapter.

Section 8.4 Harassment and Grievance Officers (HGOs)

8.4.1 The Harassment and Grievance Officers (HGOs) are charged with implementing the National DSA Harassment Policy. The Leadership Committee must appoint at least two members in good standing as HGOs no later than 30 days after the annual chapter convention, with a majority confirmation vote by membership at the following General Body Meeting.

8.4.2 After being confirmed into office, they shall serve one year, and until their successors are selected, in accordance with the National DSA Harassment Policy.

8.4.3 Any duly reported allegation of harassment or abuse as defined in the National DSA Harassment Policy shall be investigated by the chapter's HGOs.

8.4.4 HGOs will facilitate conflict resolution in all other allegations of misconduct. If unable to fulfill this duty due to conflict of interest or lack of resources, an ad-hoc committee appointed by the Leadership Committee or by the general membership, assembled at the annual convention, general body meeting, or special meeting called for that purpose, provided at least 72 hours notice has been given.

8.4.5 HGO office may create or facilitate trainings on mediation, transformative justice, anti oppression, and other related trainings that improve protected classes membership interaction.

Section 8.5 Determination, Remedies, and Penalties

8.5.1 Per the National DSA Harassment Policy, determination and disposition of a case investigated and reported by HGOs rests with the elected Leadership Committee. Determination and disposition of all other cases shall also be the responsibility of the Leadership Committee.

8.5.2 The Leadership Committee will assess the factual allegation in a report from the HGOs or an ad-hoc investigative committee. It will be determined credible if it more-likely-than-not occurred, per the standard set by the National DSA Harassment Policy.

8.5.3 If the Leadership Committee finds a report to be credible, they are authorized to carry out any and all measures authorized by the National DSA Constitution, Bylaws, or Harassment Policy, or any resolutions adopted by the National Convention or National Political Committee in the interests of justice and equity.

8.5.4 The Leadership committee reserves the right to deviate from strictly enforcing this code. Any deviations must produce an outcome which is fairer, and aligned with our values and cannot violate local or national bylaws.

Section 8.6 Suspension and Expulsion

Every effort shall be made to resolve a grievance or report through mediation and other forms of alternative dispute resolution. However, should it become necessary to enforce remedies and penalties against a member, including but not limited to suspension and expulsion, the Leadership Committee shall follow the disciplinary procedures set forth in *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* in all cases which they are applicable, and in which they are not inconsistent with the National DSA Constitution, Bylaws, or Harassment Policy; or any

resolutions adopted by the National Convention or National Political Committee; or the bylaws, special rules of order, or other procedures adopted by this chapter.

Section 8.7 National DSA Rights Reserved

Per the National DSA Constitution and Bylaws and the National DSA Harassment Policy, the National Political Committee and National Convention reserve the right to expel a member for misconduct investigated under this article or enforce any other penalty or remedy deemed just and equitable.

Section 8.8 Appeals and Prohibition on Retaliation

Appeals of decisions made by the Leadership Committee, the general membership or National Political Committee shall be conducted according to the rules and procedures laid out in the the National DSA Constitution and Bylaws and the National DSA Harassment Policy. There shall be zero tolerance for retaliation for any action arising from use of this article, as stated in the National DSA Harassment Policy.

Article 9 Nominations and Elections

Section 9.1 Nominations and Elections Committee

A Nominations and Elections Committee shall be established by vote at a Regular Meeting on a frequency determined by the Leadership Committee but in no case more than four months prior to an election. It shall solicit and receive nominations for the positions to be elected, tally the votes of the contests, and otherwise assist the Leadership Committee in planning and facilitating the election process.

Section 9.2 Nominations Process

With the exceptions of elections for the Leadership Committee at the chapter's annual convention as provided for in Article 12, nominations for any contest shall be opened one month in advance of the election. Nominations can be taken up to the election including the election meeting.

Section 9.3 Elections Process

9.3.1 Approval Voting: For all elections, the default voting method shall be approval voting where each voter may choose as many candidates as desired. The winner is the candidate chosen by the most voters.

9.3.2 Score Voting: By majority vote, the membership may choose to use score voting for any election using a 0-2 scale. For each candidate, a voter may choose 0 to indicate disapproval, 1 to indicate neutral, or 2 to indicate approval of that candidate. The winner of an election conducted with score voting is the candidate with the highest score. A voter who casts an incomplete ballot (does not indicate a score for every candidate) will be assumed to have voted 0 for any unmarked candidates. When counting ballots which contain all votes not clearly indicating a 1 or 2 (e.g., a check or X), votes for a candidate shall be counted as the highest score on the scale.

9.3.3 There shall be no proxy votes permitted, with exceptions made on a case by case basis by the co-chairs for members with disabilities or other mobility issues.

Article 10 Amendments

Section 10.1 Annual Convention

Proposed amendments to these bylaws will be considered at the annual chapter convention. For a proposed amendment to be considered, it must include all specific language to be added, removed, or changed, have 20 cosponsors, and be submitted to the leadership committee not more than 90 days and not fewer than 21 days in advance of the annual convention.

Amendments to these bylaws require a two-thirds vote and become effective on the first day of the next month following the annual convention, unless provided otherwise.

Any bylaws amendment necessitating a change in leadership composition must include timing for those changes to be made. Those changes, and any elections mandated by those changes, must take place no later than the second general body meeting after passage of the bylaws amendment or the chapter convention, whichever is sooner.

Section 10.2 Emergency Amendments

While every effort should be made to deal with bylaws during the annual convention, occasionally these bylaws may need to be changed between conventions. These bylaws may be amended at any other time with at least 30 days notice provided the submission meets one of the following criteria:

10.2.1 An amendment is submitted to the Leadership Committee with 20 members in good standing signing as co-sponsors, and is accepted by a two-thirds majority for consideration at the next general meeting at which it is eligible to be considered.

10.2.2 An amendment is submitted to the Leadership Committee for consideration at the next general meeting with 30 members in good standing signing as co-sponsors, with no more than 30 days having passed between the initial co-sponsor's signature and the 30th co-sponsor's signature at the next general meeting at which it is eligible to be considered.

Members will receive notice of any proposed amendments from the Secretary in a timely fashion after the change has been submitted in accordance with this article. Emergency amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds vote, and become effective immediately unless provided otherwise.

Section 10.3 Co-sponsors

All co-sponsors for bylaws amendments must be members in good standing. All names of co-sponsors must include the date and time of co-sponsorship. Co-sponsorship must take place after the specific language of a bylaws amendment has been finalized, and any subsequent changes to the bylaws amendment cannot be made without co-sponsors re-affirming their co-sponsorship with an updated date and time.

Section 10.4 Non-Substantive Amendments

Whenever necessary, the secretary of the organization can make non-substantive amendments to these bylaws to correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, numbering, capitalization, organization, layout, nomenclature, or other non-substantive issues with the bylaws. At no time may these non-substantive amendments significantly modify the operations of the chapter and all proposed non-substantive amendments must be approved by the Leadership Committee by unanimous consent and announced to the membership through all regular channels.

Article 11 Jurisdiction

The Austin DSA area shall be Austin, Texas and Central Texas from Waco to San Marcos. The core area of Austin DSA will include Austin/Travis County, Bastrop County, Williamson County, Burnet County, Blanco County, Hays County, and Caldwell County. Austin DSA will accept members from the Waco, Temple, Killeen areas until such time as DSA members can form a DSA Organizing Committee in the Waco, Temple, and Killeen areas. Austin DSA will accept members from the San Marcos area until such time we can help form a San Marcos Area Organizing Committee.

Article 12 Chapter Convention

Section 12.1 Purpose

A chapter convention, distinct from the general body meetings, will be the chief opportunity for the entire chapter to make decisions that will guide the chapter's work for the coming year. At the chapter convention, the general body votes on the chapter's Leadership Committee for the coming year, the chapter's priorities for the coming year, any amendments to these bylaws the general body deems necessary, and any other pressing business.

Section 12.2 Notice and Timing

When possible, the chapter convention shall be held each January to avoid overlapping with major elections or holidays. The chapter convention shall be held on a Saturday or Sunday. Notice of the location and rough agenda for the convention will be sent to the membership at least 14 days before the convention through all normal communication channels in use by the chapter at that time.

Section 12.3 Accessibility

Since the chapter convention will hold considerable importance to the chapter's work, every effort should be made to make the convention accessible. The convention will be held in a location accessible for people with disabilities. Childcare and food should be provided. To ensure a high level of participation, signed proxy voting will be allowed for the convention. All signed proxies must be submitted to the Leadership Committee at least seven days in advance, and no member will be allowed to serve as more than one member's proxy.

Section 12.4 Amendments to the Bylaws

At the annual convention, bylaws changes will be voted on by members of Austin DSA in good standing in accordance with the rules set forth in Article 10 of this document.

Section 12.5 Priorities Resolutions

At the annual convention, priorities resolutions will be voted on by members of Austin DSA in good standing. Priorities resolutions are intended to guide the chapter's activities for the following year, but will not serve as strict limits on the chapter's activities or the activities of its leadership.

All priorities resolutions must be submitted to the chapter's co-chairs with at least 20 members in good standing signing as co-sponsors. Individual priorities resolutions may be co-sponsored individually or co-sponsored and submitted together as a full set of priorities. The chapter shall adopt at least 2, but no more than 5, priorities resolutions.

Section 12.6 Leadership Committee Elections, Special Provisions

The chapter's elected leadership as described in Article 5 shall be elected by secret ballot at the annual chapter convention per Article 9 of these bylaws except for the following provisions:

12.6.1 Nominations for the Leadership Committee will open at least 30 days before the annual convention.

12.6.2 All nominees must be members of DSA in good standing.

12.6.3 Nominees must confirm their willingness to serve and supply a photograph and a statement at least seven days in advance of the annual convention.

12.6.4 Any ties that may occur during leadership elections will be settled by a runoff election at the next general body meeting.