

Bylaws

Democratic Socialists of America, Asheville, NC Local Chapter

ARTICLE I. Name.

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

ARTICLE II. Purpose.

The Asheville, North Carolina Local of the Democratic Socialists of America seeks to facilitate the transition to a truly democratic and socialist society, one in which the means/resources of production are democratically and socially controlled.

DSA rejects an economic order based solely on private profit, alienated labor, gross inequalities of wealth and power, discrimination based on race and sex, and brutality and violence in defense of the status quo.

DSA envisions a humane social order based on popular control of resources and production, economic planning, equitable distribution, gender and racial equality, and non-oppressive relationships.

Our conception of socialism is a profoundly democratic one. 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 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, AVLDSA officers, and they 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 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 may vote to expel them from AVLDSA. In order for such a finding to be made, any AVLDSA member must formally prefer written charges against the member in question to the Steering Committee of AVLDSA, which shall set the date of a Steering Committee 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 Steering Committee meeting. An expelled full member may appeal to the National Political Committee of DSA.

Section 3. Pledges.

The Local chapter may establish a Local 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 pay for administrative costs associated with meetings and political education events.

ARTICLE IV. Local Meetings.

Section 1. General Meeting.

The Local 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. The Steering Committee shall set the agenda for Regular Meetings, with input provided by any members who wish to do so. In general, it is the highest legislative body of the Local.

Section 2. Regular Meetings.

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

Section 3. Special Meetings.

The Local Steering Committee may call a Special Meeting of the Local 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 (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 Officers: Powers and Duties.

Section 1. Officers and Terms

The officers of the Local will be the Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Section 2. Chair.

- a) The Chair will be the chief executive officer of the Local. They will preside over Local and Steering Committee meetings or will appoint a substitute to assume the powers and duties of the presiding officer. The Chair will be the official public spokesperson for the Local and will initiate such actions and policies as the Local's general welfare may demand. In the event that the Chair is unable to perform their duties for a single event or a longer period of time, the Secretary will serve as replacement.
- b) The Chair will be responsible also for coordinating the day-to-day operations and political work of the Local's branches and committees.
- c) The Chair will report to Local 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.

Section 3. Secretary.

- a) The Secretary will be responsible for answering all correspondence and queries of the Local, and for maintaining an up-to-date membership list of the Local and ensuring the security and confidentiality of its members. They will insure effective communication with the national DSA.
- b) The Secretary will be responsible also for the taking of minutes of all local and Steering Committee Meetings, and shall have custody of these minutes, and the resolutions, reports and other official records of The Local. 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 and will ensure the security and confidentiality of those records. All funds collected by the Local will be turned over to the Treasurer, who shall deposit them in a bank account under the name of the Local. In cooperation with the Secretary, the Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring that membership dues are paid up-to-date.
- b) The Treasurer will prepare the annual Local budget, and deliver the Local financial report to the General Meeting of the Local, as well as periodic progress reports as requested by the Steering Committee of the Local.

Section 5. Additional Duties.

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

ARTICLE VII. Steering Committee.

Section 1. Composition.

The Trustees of the Local Steering Committee will be composed of eight (8) elected members including the officers of the Local. The chair(s) of any Local Youth Sections and any Local 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 By-Laws by the members of the Local and approval by DSA National, nomination for AVLDSA Officers and Trustees shall be opened 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 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, 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 Local 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 full members of The Local, and for acting on the organization's behalf between Local meetings.

Section 3. Meetings.

The meetings of the Steering Committee will be held at the call of the Chair at such intervals as may be determined by a prior Steering Committee Meeting or by consultation with any three members of the Steering Committee. 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 three members of the Steering Committee 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 by-laws of The Local or for conduct prejudicial to the best interest of AVLDSA. Should any member of the Steering Committee miss three 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 Chair 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 opened ten (10) days before and closed at the annual General Meeting. The call for nominations shall be announced to full members 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 in good standing with national DSA.

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

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 August 1 to July 31 or until their successors are elected.

Section 5. Vacancies.

In the event of a vacancy in the office of Chair the Secretary will assume that office. In the event of a vacancy in any other Local office, the Local 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.

ARTICLE IX. Branches.

Section 1. Definition.

A branch is a subgroup of the Local consisting of at least five (5) full members in good standing with national DSA. Branches may be defined by geography, work site, constituency (e.g., labor, minority, feminist), or area of political work (e.g., peace action, environmental movement). The chairs of branches will hold membership on the Local Steering Committee.

Section 2. Youth Sections.

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

ARTICLE X. Committees.

Section 1. Standing committees

A standing committee is a subgroup of the Local consisting of at least two (2) full members in good standing with national DSA. 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 full members at a Regular Meeting of the Local. 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 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 not 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 delegates and alternates to the National Convention, or other National, Regional, or State bodies, will be elected by members of the Local 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 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 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 must submit such draft amendments to the AVLDSA Steering Committee 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 by-laws 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, 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 in contravention of these Bylaws is null and void.

Section 3. Diversity.

The Local shall strive for diversity of both membership and its governing body. Our goal is that at least two of the eight 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, all remaining funds and assets are to be released to national DSA, or at the Local's discretion such other organizations that are organized exclusively for the promotion of social welfare and that will operate to further the common good and general welfare of the community.