

# Bylaws of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America

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## **ARTICLE I. Name.**

The name of the Local Chapter shall be the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). DSA is a not-for-profit corporation.

## **ARTICLE II. Purpose.**

The Whatcom County WA 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 intend 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 and political power and the vast majority of the population.

## **ARTICLE III. Membership.**

### Section 1. Membership

Members of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter of DSA will be those individuals whose dues to national DSA are paid in full and who reside and/or work in Whatcom County. 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 Whatcom County Local Chapter, 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 2. Removal of Members

If a member is found to be in substantial disagreement with the principles or policies of national DSA; if they are found to be consistently engaging in undemocratic, disruptive behavior; or if they are found to be under the discipline of any democratic centralist organization, the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter may vote to expel them from DSA. In order for such a finding to be made, another Whatcom County WA

Local Chapter DSA member must formally notify the Harassment and Grievance Officers. If the Harassment and Grievance Officers conclude that their recommendation is that the member in question is removed for a period of time, they will refer that recommendation to the Local Chapter Executive Committee, which shall set the date of a Local Chapter meeting for deliberations on the charges. The member in question must receive a summary of the written charges and notice of the meeting a minimum of two weeks before that meeting takes place. At that meeting, the member shall be given 10 minutes to speak prior to the vote. Expulsion of a member or affiliate member requires a three-fourths vote of the Local Chapter meeting. An expelled member 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.

### Section 4. Privacy Concerns.

Care will be taken to protect the privacy of each member's contact information.

## **ARTICLE IV. Local Chapter Meetings.**

### Section 1. Electoral Meeting.

The Whatcom County WA Local Chapter will hold a minimum of two Electoral Meetings annually, and all members of the Local Chapter will receive three weeks notice and an agenda of the Electoral Meeting. Notice may be sent by electronic means, but individuals who have not provided an email address must be sent a paper copy or contacted by phone or text. The Electoral Meeting will elect Local Chapter officers and may adopt a budget. The Electoral meeting may coincide with a General meeting.

### Section 2. General Meetings.

The Local Chapter will hold General Meetings at least four times annually, the time and place of which shall be set and communicated by the Local Chapter Executive Committee at least one week in advance. The General Meetings will set Local Chapter policy and work priorities, and may include political education sessions.

The Local Chapter Executive Committee will set the agenda for General Meetings. Any member of the Local Chapter may propose agenda items for the General Meetings by notifying the Executive Committee in writing at least five days in advance. In general, the General Meeting is the operating legislative body of the Local Chapter.

### Section 3. Emergency Meetings.

The Local Chapter Executive Committee may call an Emergency Meeting of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter with five days notice when an urgent and important matter requires deliberation.

### Section 4. Quorum.

a) A quorum of 10% of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter membership (but not fewer than six persons) and 50% of the Executive Committee is required for General Meetings and Emergency Meetings to transact business.

b) A quorum of 15% of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter membership (but not fewer than six persons) and 50% of the Executive Committee is required for the election of officers during biannual Electoral Meetings. If a quorum is not met at an Electoral Meeting, the existing officers will remain in office and the nominees for elected office will remain in place without new nominations until the convening of another Electoral Meeting with a 15% quorum.

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

### Section 1. Officers and Terms

The officers of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter will be two Co-Chairs, one Vice Chair, one Secretary, and one Treasurer. The term of office will be six months, and shall run from their election until either they are re-elected or their successors are elected.

### Section 2. Vacancies.

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

### Section 3. Co-Chairs.

a. The Co-Chairs will be the chief executive officers of the Local Chapter. They will preside over Local Chapter and Executive Committee meetings or will appoint a substitute to assume the powers and duties of the presiding officer as specified in Rusty's Rules of Order. The Chairs will be the official public spokespeople for the Local Chapter and will initiate such actions and policies as the Local Chapter's general welfare may demand. In the event that a co-Chair is unable to perform their duties for a single event or a longer period of time, the Vice Chair will serve as replacement.

b) The Co-Chairs will be responsible 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 General Meetings with a report on the business of the Executive Committee Meetings, at which time a copy of the minutes of those meetings will be available for inspection.

### Section 4. Vice-Chair

a) Vice-Chair will assist the Co-Chairs in day-to-day operations and may assume additional responsibility as decided by consensus of the executive committee.

### Section 5. Secretary.

a) The Secretary will maintain an up-to-date membership list of the Local Chapter, ensure effective

communication between the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter and the national DSA, and will temporarily assume the responsibilities of the Co-Chair if the Vice Chair is not able to do so.

b) The Secretary will also be responsible for the taking of minutes of all Local Chapter and Executive Committee Meetings. The secretary 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 6. Treasurer.

The Treasurer will be responsible for the funds and financial records of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter. All funds collected by the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter will be turned over to the Treasurer, who shall deposit them in a bank account under the name "Whatcom (County) DSA." In cooperation with the Secretary, the Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring that membership dues are paid up-to-date. The Treasurer will prepare the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter budget, and deliver the Whatcom County WA DSA financial report to the Electoral Meeting of the Local Chapter, as well as periodic progress reports as requested by the Executive Committee of the Local Chapter.

#### Section 7. Additional Duties.

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

### **ARTICLE VI. Executive Committee.**

#### Section 1. Composition.

The Local Chapter Executive Committee will be composed of the five officers of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter and the chair(s) of Youth Sections.

#### Section 2. Duties.

a) The Executive Committee administers the affairs of the Local Chapter and oversees the implementation of the decisions of the Electoral and General Meetings; it may also propose policy to the Electoral and General Meetings. It shall have the power to receive reports of any Committee/Group, and advise thereon; to call emergency meetings of the Local Chapter; and to act on any matter that requires immediate and urgent action. The Executive Committee is the regular executive body of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter, and thus subordinate to its Legislative bodies, the Electoral and General Meetings.

b) The Executive Committee will be responsible for proposing guidelines and policies that will subsequently be voted on by members of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter of DSA, and for acting on the organization's behalf between Local Chapter meetings.

#### Section 3. Meetings.

The meetings of the Executive Committee will be held at the call of the Co-Chairs at such intervals as may be determined by a prior Executive Committee Meeting or by consultation with any four members of

the Executive Committee. All members of the Executive Committee must (ordinarily) be given five days oral, written or electronic notice of regular Executive Committee Meetings; a 24-hour notice may be given under special emergency circumstances.

#### Section 4. Quorum.

A quorum of four officers, of the Executive Committee is required for the transaction of Executive Committee business.

### **ARTICLE VII. Youth Sections**

#### Section 1. Youth Sections.

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 Executive Committee.

### **ARTICLE VIII Committees/"Working Groups"**

#### Section 1. Duration.

The Local Chapter will have Standing and Special committees. Standing Committees will exist indefinitely and must be established and dissolved by a vote of members at a General Meeting of the Local Chapter. Special Committees may be formed for a limited and explicit duration by a vote of the Local Chapter Executive Committee. The formation of these Special Committees may be overruled by a majority vote (50%+1) of Whatcom County WA Local Chapter members at a General Meeting of the Local Chapter.

#### Section 2. Leadership

Committee representatives will be selected by a vote of their respective Committee for a term of six months.

#### Section 3. Duties

Committee representatives will be responsible for reporting committee activities to the Executive Committee and the General Meetings of the Local Chapter.

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

#### Section 1. Eligibility to Vote

Local Chapter delegates and alternates to the National Convention, as well as to any regional or state organizations, will be elected by members in good standing of the Whatcom County Local Chapter of DSA.

#### Section 2. Schedule of Elections to National, Regional, or State Organizations.

Elections for the National Convention delegation shall be held on the schedule announced by the national organization. Elections to regional or state organizations will be held on the schedule announced by those organizations.

The Executive Committee shall solicit nominations for delegates at a General Meeting approximately six months prior to the National Convention. Delegates may be self-nominated.

No election for delegates to the National Convention shall be held more than four months, or less than forty-five days, prior to the opening of the National Convention. No election for delegates shall be conducted before the apportionment of delegates.

### Section 3. 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. Prohibited Activity**

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

## **ARTICLE XI. Officer Nominations, Elections, and Recalls.**

### Section 1. Nominations Committee.

A three-person Nominations Committee shall be established at least one month prior to every election by vote of a General Meeting. It shall solicit and receive nominations for the positions to be elected.

The Nominations Committee may not contain any current officers.

### Section 2. Officer Nominations Process.

An announcement of elections shall be made at a General meeting one month prior to the twice-yearly Electoral Meeting. The nominating process shall be closed two weeks prior to the election. Officers may not be self-nominated.

### Section 3. Uncontested Positions.

If a position is uncontested, the nominee will be declared elected by acclamation.

### Section 4. Elections

All voters must be electronically verified as active members of WDSA.

- a. Online voting security is managed by voting software, such as OpaVote, Loomio, or a program developed by DSA members for this purpose.

Eligible voters can submit votes on the day of the election in person or electronically.

- b. Voting can begin electronically at 12 AM on the day of the election.
  - i. If the voter is not present at the general meeting where the election is held, their vote must be submitted no later than 1 hour after the official general meeting start time. (Example: absentee voting closes at 7 PM on the day of the general meeting scheduled to begin at 6 PM.)
  - ii. If the general meeting on election day is held virtually, all votes must be submitted electronically.

Elections will take place using a single transferable voting (STV) method.

- a. The election threshold for single positions is 50%+1.
- b. The election threshold for co-positions is 33.3%+1.
- c. Beginning with the candidate with the least amount of votes, votes for candidates that do not meet the threshold will be redistributed to the next chosen candidate for each voter until a candidate meets the threshold.
- d. In the event of a tie using this method, the winner will be selected at random, such as by coin toss or drawing lots.

To ensure the consistency of all elections, the nominating committee will use voting software to collect election data and follow the schedule listed below.

- e. Candidate statements will be sent to all members 3 days prior to the election, by email.
- f. Statements must be submitted by 7 PM, 4 days prior to the election. Candidates may accept their nominations at any point before this time.
- g. The nominating committee must contact nominees no later than 1 week before candidate statements are due.
- h. Candidate nominations close 3 days prior to the nominee contact date.
- i. The nominating committee will request nominations no later than 1 week prior to the contact date. Nominations close 1 week after the contact deadline.
- j. The nominating committee will be selected and finalized during the general meeting prior to the election, and announced via email by the steering committee by the next day.
- k. Example: The general meeting prior to the election is on February 12th. Volunteers will be selected for the nominating committee prior to or during that meeting. The steering committee will announce the nominating committee by February 13th. The nominating committee must submit a request for nominations from members by 11:59 PM on February 19th. Nominations close on February 26th. Nominees will be contacted by March 1st. Nominees must submit candidate statements by 7 PM on March 8th. Candidate statements will be emailed to members on March 9th. The election is held on March 12th.

## Section 5. Recalls

Any officer of the 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 in good standing must formally refer a request to remove said officer to the Local Chapter Executive Committee, which will set a date of a Local Chapter meeting for deliberations on the accused officer's removal. The officer 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 will be given a chance to speak in their own defense at this meeting. Removal of an officer requires a two-thirds vote of

the Local Chapter meeting.

## **ARTICLE XII. Amendments.**

Proposed amendments to these Bylaws must be made by written resolution, endorsed by five members of the Whatcom County WA Local Chapter of DSA, and submitted to the Executive Committee a month in advance of an Electoral or General Meeting. The Executive Committee is required to provide the Local Chapter membership with two weeks' written notice of the proposed amendments. The amendment must be approved by a majority vote of two consecutive (General or Electoral) Whatcom County WA Local Chapter meetings.

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

### Section 1. Rules.

The Rules contained in Rusty's Rules of Order shall 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 Rusty's Rules of Order upon the request of a member. Rusty's Rules of Order shall be shared with all current Whatcom County WA Local Chapter DSA members and each new member upon joining.

### Section 2. Action Out of Order.

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

### Section 3. Harassment Policy.

Democratic Socialists of America is committed to creating a space that is welcoming and inclusive to members of all genders, races, and classes. The following policy provides guidelines to ensure that everyone is able to organize without fear of harassment, abuse, or harm.

#### 1. Scope

- a. Prohibited behavior. Members shall not engage in harassment on the basis of sex, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, physical appearance, disability, race, color, religion, national origin, class, age, or profession. (Harassment based on categories not encompassed by those listed section (a) will be evaluated at the discretion of the chapter's DSA harassment grievance officer ("HGO") and Steering Committee representatives.) Harassing or abusive behavior, such as unwelcome attention, inappropriate or offensive remarks, slurs, or jokes, physical or verbal intimidation, stalking, inappropriate physical contact or proximity, and other verbal and physical conduct constitute harassment when:
  - i. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a member's continued affiliation with DSA;



- ii. Submission or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for organizational decisions affecting such individual; or
- iii. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating a hostile environment interfering with an individual's capacity to organize within DSA.

Retaliation. This policy prohibits retaliation against any member for bringing a complaint of harassment pursuant to this policy. This policy also prohibits retaliation against a person who assists someone with a complaint of harassment, or participates in any manner in an investigation or resolution of a complaint of discrimination or harassment. Retaliatory behaviors includes threats, intimidation, reprisals, and/or adverse actions related to organizing. If any party to the complaint believes there has been retaliation, they may inform the chapter's HGO who will determine whether to factor the retaliation into the original complaint, or treat it as an individual incident.

## 2. Reporting Harassment

- a. Complaints. Members who believe they have been harassed by another member may follow the standard DSA complaint process by filing a formal complaint with the chapter's HGO. There will be no time limits requiring the accuser to file a report within any amount of time after the alleged harassment has occurred.
- b. Appeals process. Either party may appeal the form of relief determined by the chapter Steering Committee by filling out an appeal form within thirty days of receiving written notice of the Steering Committee's decision. The chapter's HGO will advise on the process for filing an appeal with the National Harassment Grievance Officer.

## **ARTICLE XIV. Harassment and Grievance Officers.**

### Section 1. Position Responsibilities.

Whatcom County (WA) DSA shall select two Harassment and Grievance Officers (HGOs). Their responsibilities will be in accordance with [Resolution 33 of National DSA](#).

### Section 2. Selection.

Both HGOs will be nominated by a member of the Whatcom County (WA) DSA steering committee. Their nomination will be made public digitally and at a general organizing meeting, and membership will be given an open comment period until the next membership meeting. If any conduct concerns are brought forward, the SC will retract the nomination without investigation, and put forward a new nomination at the next organizing meeting. If no concerns have been raised by the next membership meeting, the membership will vote to confirm the selection of HGO.

### Section 3. Restrictions.

At least 50% of the HGOs shall not be members of the steering committee.

The steering committee will make an effort to ensure a majority of HGOs are members of non-dominant identities. If they are unable to do so, or if they feel their is a compelling reason for not doing so, they will inform the membership of their rationale when nominating the HGO.

Section 4. Term Limits and Removal from Office.

The HGOs will serve at the will of the steering committee. At any time, members of the steering committee can vote by simple majority to nominate new HGOs at the next general organizing meeting. Moreover, any member can bring concerns to the steering committee and ask for the selection of new HGOs. Any member may also call for a vote at a general organizing meeting to reopen the nominating process, which will be decided by a simple majority of the membership present.

**ARTICLE XV. Distribution of assets.**

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