



# **Metro D.C. Democratic Socialists of America**

December 13, 2020

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# Agenda

12:00: Gavel In

12:10: Roll Call

12:15: Robert's Rules Lesson

12:30: Vote on Rules

12:40 - 1:15: Committee and Commission Reports (Steering, Secretary, Bylaws Reform Commission)

1:15-1:30: Break

1:30-5:00: Deliberation

Order:

R1: Prince George's County Branch

A1.1: Amendment to Amendment 1: Bylaws Section 3.1.1 – Resolution Process

A1.2: Amendment to Amendment 1: Bylaws Section 6 - Chapter Formations

A1: Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America Bylaws

R2: Adopting Gender Inclusive Language as a Chapter

R3: Annual Financial Commitment to Indigenous Sovereignty

R4: Resolution to Hold an Endorsement Vote for Karishma Mehta,  
candidate for Virginia's 49th District in the House of Delegates (First Read)

# Convention Rules

Please note: this is the first year we are holding an online convention, and these draft rules may be subject to change as we determine the best ways to facilitate democratic debate. The draft rules will be approved by the convention before they take effect.

## Organization of the Convention

1. The Steering Committee is officially responsible for organizing the convention but has delegated its authority to the Local Convention Planning Commission (LCPC).
2. The Chair of the LCPC shall serve as the Chair of the Convention and may appoint such assistants or replacements as they deem necessary. The Secretary of Metro DC DSA shall serve as Secretary to the Convention, keeping the official record of the Convention, and may appoint such assistants as they deem necessary.
3. The Local Convention Planning Committee shall:
  - a. manage all submitted constitutional amendments and resolutions. They shall work to reconcile any submissions that are out of order or beyond the scope or powers outlined in the MDCDSA and DSA bylaws. Local Convention Planning Commission shall also work with sponsor(s) who submit similar or overlapping submissions in the interest of developing a single mutually agreeable submission for all sponsors. The Local Convention Planning Commission may propose steps to facilitate consideration of resolutions, including but not limited to appointing small groups to redraft or combine resolutions, preferably in advance of the convention, and in consultation with the sponsors. The Local Convention Planning Commission will structure the order in which resolutions are to be considered, the time allotted to each, and the number of speakers pro and con.
  - b. coordinate logistics and develop a final schedule for the Convention, pending approval from the Convention itself.
  - c. appoint a Styles Commission, which shall have the power to rewrite any resolution or bylaws amendments passed by the Convention to make it consistent with the style of the document being amended (i.e. implementing gender neutral language, changing the order of sentences, etc.). The Styles Commission may not make any substantive changes to resolutions or amendments passed by the Convention that change their final meaning or interpretation. The Styles Commission will be comprised of members appointed by the LCPC and the authors of all bylaws amendments that were passed by the Convention. (see Appendix A)

## Delegate Credentials

1. All members in good standing of the Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America local that have paid their dues as of November 13th, 2020 shall be seated as delegates. The Administrative Committee will be tasked with moderating all credentials disputes.

## General Procedure

1. Each session of the Convention has pre-established time limits. The only exception to the established time limits would occur if there is a motion to extend the time approved by the majority of the

delegates. Any such motion to extend the time must include a corresponding reduction of time for another session. At the end of each session, the document presented and amendments, if any, shall be voted up or down. Amendments shall be voted first; the document as amended will then also be voted up or down.

2. Except as provided in these Rules and the Bylaws, the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall govern the proceedings of the Convention. The Chair of each Convention plenary session shall be the sole interpreter of the Convention Rules and may appoint a parliamentarian and such other assistants as needed to conduct the session. Any delegate may appeal any ruling of the Chair to the Convention. The ruling of the Chair may be overturned by a vote in favor of the appeal by a majority of delegates present and voting.
  - a. Procedural motions concern how to proceed with a matter such as moving to refer the matter to the Steering Committee or moving to extend or end discussion. Procedural motions may be made at the Convention. In order to be voted on, a procedural motion needs a second. If no other delegate seconds the motion, the motion fails.
  - b. Substantive motions concern amendments to the content of Convention documents. No amendments will be allowed from the floor at this Convention as the time limits for amendments are established as part of the organization of the Convention and explained in emails regarding the Convention and on the Convention explainer on the website. Amendments received by the Convention committee at the required times will be part of the discussion of that Convention document.
  - c. Point of Personal Privilege — a seated delegate may raise a point of personal privilege at any time. A point of personal privilege pertains only to issues of personal discomfort or needs such as not being able to hear the speaker, etc.
3. Only delegates may speak on questions coming before the Convention in plenary session. Speakers on all motions shall be limited to two minutes, unless the Convention accepts a different limit.
4. Each delegate shall be entitled to one vote on all questions coming before the Convention. All resolutions before the Convention shall be decided by majority vote of the delegates present and voting. All procedural motions shall require a majority vote except where otherwise provided in the Rules. A motion to suspend the rules shall require a two thirds vote.
5. Any amendment or resolution that is to be considered will first be motivated by its author. Then a certain number of speakers will be heard for and against, the number to be determined by the amount of time remaining in the session. When the time for comments for and against is exhausted, the Chair will ask for a delegate to call the question.
6. Each amendment will be considered separately, one after another. In the interest of time, the Chair of the session will first ask delegates for a show of support for each amendment before it is considered.
7. All voting will be through online methods. The Chair of the Convention session shall determine the results of online votes and report the results to the Convention Secretary as well as announcing it to the convention session. A vote will be recounted at the request of any delegate or seated alternate, or if in the judgment of the Chair it is warranted due to closeness of the initial count. The Chair shall appoint such tellers as needed to assist in the counting of the vote.

8. Roll call votes shall be conducted at the request of thirty percent of the delegates and seated alternates present and voting.

### **Resolutions and Bylaws Amendments**

1. All proposed amendments to the Bylaws or resolutions shall have a sponsor, who is a member in good standing of Metro DC DSA. There may be cosponsors, who are members in good standing.
2. Proposed amendments or resolutions shall be submitted in electronic form to the Local Convention Planning Commission no later than December 4th, 2020. Amendments or resolutions submitted after December 4th, 2020 shall be referred to the LCPC for consideration.
3. Amendments to proposals must be submitted electronically to the Local Convention Planning Commission no later than 11:59pm ET, December 11th 2020. Amendments submitted after 11:59pm ET, December 11th 2020 shall be referred to the LCPC.
4. On December 12th, 2020, the Local Convention Planning Commission shall distribute to all Convention delegates a Convention packet listing all bylaws amendments and all resolutions.
5. Resolutions should consist primarily of statements of policy or outlines for organizational activity. The Local Convention Planning Commission will be empowered to remove excess "Whereas" clauses from resolutions.

### **Styles Commission Members**

1. Authors of passed bylaws amendments
2. Kurtis Hagans
3. Irene Koo
4. Ben Davis



# Resolutions

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## **R1: Prince George's County Branch**

**Sponsors:** Kurt S., Woody W., Ashley M., Tom B., Larry M, Ralph C., Zuhayr A, & Kurtis H.

**Whereas,** exploratory committee was chartered to develop a Prince George's County branch;

**Whereas,** the exploratory committee has helped develop 177 MDC DSA chapter members in good standing within Prince George's County and an initial organizing committee;

**Whereas,** the initial Organizing Committee drafted the below bylaws;

**Whereas,** the below bylaws were ratified by the Prince George's County MDC DSA chapter members;

**Whereas,** the initial organizing committee has elected an interim Steering Committee;

**Whereas,** transition from the interim steering to steering will occur in accordance to the elections procedures outlined in the bylaws;

**Therefore be it resolved,** that the MDC chapter of DSA formally recognizes the Prince George's County branch with the below bylaws and with the below listed initial officers.

[Bylaws attached here](#)

## **R2: Adopting Gender Inclusive Language as a Chapter**

**Sponsors:** Kara M., Ursula C., & Katie S.

**Whereas**, the chapter has experienced rapid growth, we should recognize the gender diversity among our comrades as well as the range of terminology, adjectives, pronouns, and nouns they use when identifying themselves; and

**Whereas**, as democratic socialists, we envision a society where social, racial, gender, and class inequities are eliminated, we build toward that vision by practicing and respecting each other's gender identity, gender expression, including all pronouns and names, in all of our communications and interactions.

**Therefore be it resolved**, that all members of the MDC DSA Chapter practice gender inclusive language by incorporating gender-neutral vocabulary when addressing comrades; and be it

**Resolved**, that all members make every good faith effort to eliminate gendered language such as "you guys," "dudes," or any terminology where male gender is assumed to be the default. Gender-neutral vocabulary includes "comrades," "folks," "everyone," or any gender-neutral nouns that apply to the "you plural" form; and be it

**Resolved**, that all members make every good faith effort to address their comrades by their pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers, them/they/theirs) when they are clearly given; and be it

**Resolved**, that we assume first that our comrades have the best intentions when learning new pronouns, and will be provided corrections or reminders which they are expected to amend; and be it

**Resolved**, that all members do not intentionally misgender or deadname their comrades when they have been given their pronouns, gender, and/or name(s); and be it  
Finally resolved, that chapter members communicate the Metro DC DSA's gender inclusivity expectations when inviting new members, non-members, and supporters to chapter meetings, events, actions, or other chapter-sponsored business.

### **R3: Annual Financial Commitment to Indigenous Sovereignty**

**Sponsors:** Kara M., Frank S.F., Katie S., & Ursula C.

**Whereas**, the chapter is committed to an anti-capitalist society, our main goal should be to practice democratic socialist values not only through spoken land acknowledgements, but through the redistribution of wealth; and

**Whereas**, the members of the Metro DC DSA physically occupy the land originally belonging to the Piscataway, the Nacotchtank, and the Pamunkey peoples, and the majority of its non-Indigenous members conduct chapter business, organize actions, and build coalition on this land; and

**Whereas**, while our approach to anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and socialist-feminist organizing should include commitments to creating welcoming spaces, we must also develop actions to redress broken treaties, stolen land, and deprived material wealth from Indigenous peoples in the area now known as Washington, D.C. through the redistribution of physical and financial resources.

**Therefore be it resolved**, that the official chapter functions shall begin with a land acknowledgement of the diverse Indigenous peoples of the metropolitan area known as Washington D.C., but originally known and belonging to those who currently or historically have resided within its jurisdiction, including but not limited to, the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, the Nacotchtank (Anacostans), and the Pamunkey Indian Tribe; and be it

**Resolved**, that the MDC DSA chapter shall align the aforementioned acknowledgement with action, and shall by resolution commit annually to a financial contribution to an Indigenous-led organization in alignment with democratic socialist values and principals, including, but not limited to, organizations dedicated to Indigenous sovereignty, land stewardship, and rematriation; and be it

**Resolved**, that the chapter shall consult with the Socialist Feminist and Afro Socialist Caucuses when determining appropriate organizations and/or campaigns to contribute to; and be it

**Finally resolved**, that the resolution shall designate an amount for the contribution with a minimum annual financial commitment of \$1200, made in monthly installments by the chapter, with the chapter Treasurer providing quarterly or annual financial reports to the membership at the General Body Meeting.

**R4: Resolution to Hold an Endorsement Vote for Karishma Mehta,  
candidate for Virginia's 49th District in the House of Delegates**

**Sponsors:** Alex H.

**Co-sponsors:** Aliyah K., Diego J., Eric S., Helena K., Kaiser F., Maria B., & Zeina H.

*Note: This resolution is being brought up for a first read per our current bylaws rather than an immediate vote.*

**Whereas,** Virginia is one of only two states with high profile elections in 2021, with VA primaries being held on June 8th, 2021, and the district win number being 3500 votes of 50k voters;

**Whereas,** Karishma Mehta is a former Bernie Sanders Victory Captain, former candidate for MDC-DSA steering committee, current DSA member working to increase socialist power in Virginia, and has applied for official endorsement from the Metro DC DSA chapter and completed the endorsement questionnaire;

**Whereas,** Karishma has committed to running an anti-poverty socialist campaign and championing universal healthcare, housing, and education policies; rent control and tenant protection; wealth and corporate taxation; a Green New Deal and pipeline moratorium; defunding Virginia police; and campaign finance reform with RCV and publicly funded elections;

**Whereas,** endorsing and working to elect Karishma means electing a true people's candidate, who refuses corporate donations and monopoly influence, who will work exclusively for working class communities, not corporations and the wealthy few; and who has committed to 2 election cycles against incumbent Delegate Alfonso Lopez;

**Whereas,** Karishma is an organizer against Amazon HQ2, which is building its presence in the 49th district and surrounding DMV areas; fueling gentrification; surveilling union activists; partnering with law enforcement, and threatening the lives of workers and the community at-large;

**Whereas,** incumbent Delegate Alfonso Lopez has not requested a Metro DC DSA endorsement or filled out the questionnaire; and has displayed leadership antithetical to DSA values and policies, including whipping votes for the VCEA that gave fossil fuel giant Dominion Energy more monopoly power, profiting thousands off of immigrant abuse at ICA-Farmville detention facility, and showing complacency towards Amazon which is fueling gentrification, surveillance, and food insecurity in the 49th district;

**Whereas,** former efforts to support locally-endorsed candidates have been successful through mobilization of DSA member base despite strong establishment opposition and extremely well-funded opponents;

**Therefore be it resolved,** that the general body of Metro DC DSA authorizes the DSA electoral working group to organize, phonebank, distribute literature, and provide holistic support on behalf of the chapter-endorsed candidate for 2021 Virginia House of Delegates election;

**Resolved,** that Metro DC DSA endorses Karishma Mehta in her race to represent the working people of House District 49 in the Virginia General Assembly.

# Amendments

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## A1: Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America Bylaws

**Sponsors:** Peter G., Kurtis H., Conor A., Brian W., Nat S., Frank S.F., & Rachel B. *the Metro DC DSA Bylaws Revision Commission*

### Reasoning

The Bylaws Revision Commission was established by the Steering Committee, who had been elected by the general membership on a platform including the establishment of such a commission. We were tasked with reviewing our current bylaws and creating a new, definitive text. This is our final report into our findings after initial membership forums and written submissions, the preparation of a preliminary report and bylaws text, and subsequent membership forums and written submissions informed by the content of that report. Our final bylaws text remains much the same as the previous one, but there have been some changes. **Areas in the report dealing with changes, and final edits to the preliminary bylaws text, will be highlighted in yellow** to assist readers who have already read the preliminary report in digesting this report quicker.

We thank the dozens of members of the chapter who made written or oral submissions for their immense assistance in preparing the report, answering questions, and helping to identify potential changes (as well as concerns with changes that have been proposed).

The last time our chapter seriously reviewed our bylaws was in 2017. This convention, and the period of time leading up to it, has somewhat of a notorious reputation among the older members of the chapter.

Since that time, the chapter has gone through a significant period of expansion and consolidation, growing in membership, organization, power, skills, profile, and trust. The last item is worth repeating - members at forums regularly cited their perception that comrades within the chapter have a greater level of trust in each other than at any point in the past.

It is thus appropriate to revisit our governing documents to reflect areas where we believe there is a new consensus among the chapter, one forged out of mutual understanding and respect.

We do not know for sure that there is a consensus among all members on every item we propose. **We have made good-faith efforts to reflect areas where we think a consensus does exist and to incorporate concerns, but ultimately members will get to decide.** At Local Convention, they have the right to introduce amendments and have them debated and voted on. At the end of the process, the new bylaws will pass only if they achieve a 67% threshold.

We believe that the old bylaws are unfit for purpose. That is our assessment after spending an extensive amount of time reviewing member testimonies. The chapter is rife with informal practices and ignoring bylaws has become commonplace due to their either being too vague or too onerous to implement. A huge number of bodies in our bylaws simply do not exist - a source of significant confusion for new members.

In addition to this, due to poor record-keeping in the past there is substantial disagreement about what ought to be contained within the current bylaws in the first place. Members of the Commission itself remember text being passed at previous Local Conventions which is not reflected in the current text of the bylaws due to errors in compilation. There are widespread grammatical errors and duplicative sentences in the text, and very important sentences with very ambiguous meanings.

This is our final report. We believe the changes suggested here are desirable, consensus-based, and generally in the best interests of the chapter, and where there was disagreement with our preliminary draft we took great efforts to find ways to address the concerns - however the vast majority of the text received only positive commentary in the forums and written submissions, and is as such unaltered. However we recognize that not everybody will agree with every change proposed here. **We are extending an open offer to members who would like to propose changes to our suggested bylaws to assist them in drafting language that could achieve their objectives.** No member should feel discouraged in suggesting amendments to our proposals - a democratic socialist organization should always be open to debate, discussion and disagreement among members.

## General Cleanup, Removal of Bloat, Readability

A substantial amount of changes were included to make the document more readable, to remove duplicative or directly contradictory language, to eliminate formations which do not exist or never existed and which we have heard no support for revitalizing.

Testimony by a number of members (e.g. Doug T., Chad O., Brian W.) cited the bloated size of the bylaws - currently standing at over 8,000 words - as one of their primary concerns. We agree with them. **While many sections of the new bylaws include new language, the new bylaws as a whole are considerably shorter - by over 1,200 words in the final report.**

This is a significant achievement in itself - with a shorter set of bylaws, members will be better capable of reading and understanding them. **By writing the new bylaws as a coherent single document, we have also managed to ensure a greater thematic consistency within sections.** The document is organized into numbered sections and subsections, ensuring it is easier to navigate. And by eliminating language that is not now, and is unlikely to ever be implemented, we ensure that interested members do not waste time looking for things that do not exist.

## Meetings

**We were divided on whether there was a consensus to partially repeal the three-reader process.** While no submissions were made in opposition to this proposal, only a few were made in favor. (e.g. Nat S., Ben D.). **While our text retains this process, we encourage supporters of changing it to submit their proposals as an amendment** - which generally are to substantially reduce the month long notice period between introduction and voting while still maintaining a slimmer notice period.

## Working Groups

It is important to first note what we have not changed, given that a number of members submitted testimony which expressed concerns about other members' testimony.

We acknowledge that certain testimony (e.g. Brad C., Ben D., Nat S., written submission of Kurtis H.) proposed restrictions on the formation of working groups - particularly, requiring General Body Meeting approval to establish a working group - which we do believe represent the opinions of a substantial number of members. Those who advocate this change expressed the belief that work performed by the chapter should be approved by the chapter, that this would be more democratic, and that it would help to ensure that new campaign plans are thought through and useful to our overall mission.

Certain members of this commission are sympathetic to this point of view, while others are not. We all agree, however, that there is no current consensus behind a reform of this nature. A number of submissions (Allison H.,

Chad O., Irene K., Doug T., Helena K.) expressed support for retaining a process by which members can form working groups independently of general body approval. The reasoning behind this generally concerns a desire to avoid bureaucratic hurdles preventing member initiatives from getting off the ground.

This debate will likely continue, and amendments may well be submitted by members who wish to add these restrictions. **However, we do not propose to change the current system of permitting five members with a shared vision of work to establish a working group whose mission and activities do not violate our bylaws.**

**We do have support from a significantly larger group of members for changes that will improve connections between the chapter and its formations.** We saw overwhelming support for the *principle* that working groups should report back to the chapter on their activities, mission, and strategy. (Kurtis H., Brian W., Irene K., Nikko B., Jacob W., Ryan M., Kristen B., Allison H., Gabriel R., as a sampling).

Most of these submissions, where they did not suggest stricter requirements, suggested the creation of internal points of contact and reporting requirements for working groups that would give meaning to the currently inoperative text requiring working groups to update the Steering Committee and general body on their activities, as well as in many cases the reimagining or revitalization of the Campaigns Council, a currently defunct body. We support this general course of action, and this is reflected in our bylaws text.

There have been concerns raised about proposals to implement this, mostly of a constructive nature. While we do not claim to know whether our proposals will satisfy these concerns, we are committed to making a good-faith effort to address them.

Allison H. notes that if working groups were required to set rigid goals for their organizing that this would prevent flexibility in changing strategic priorities in response to experience and notes that the working group she is involved in, Stomp Out Slumlords, was held to its original purpose and strategy that the strategic reevaluation leading to their current successful tenant organizing program would not have been possible. We think this is a valid concern. Working groups should continue to have flexibility to create and update structures, strategies, and tactics over time.

To create internal points of contact - individuals that the Steering Committee, Treasurer, Administrative Committee and other chapter bodies which have expressed difficulty in finding points of contact within certain working groups - we suggest that working groups be required to designate or elect two Stewards. **In recognition that working groups have diverse structures due to the nature of their activities, and to permit the maximum amount of flexibility, we propose to permit working groups to define the role of stewards internally, other than this function as an internal liaison.** Some working groups may choose to make these positions a directly elected leadership/co-chairs with additional responsibilities in coordinating the group's efforts. For others, they may simply convey information back and forth and attend Campaigns Council meetings.

**Our recommendation is to reimagine the Campaigns Council as a body which includes members of the Steering Committee, Branch delegates, and two stewards chosen by each Working Group and Priority Campaign. As we wish to keep the requirements on Working Groups flexible, while we will require working group attendance, we will not require both Stewards to attend every meeting.** This means that if one Steward has to miss a meeting, the other can fill in for them. In addition, there will be no official consequences unless both stewards miss two Campaigns Council meetings in a row, which must take place over the course of two months. **Additionally, recognizing that there are concerns about the relevance of some of this to Branches, we propose for now that the participation of Branch working groups in the Stewards program and Campaigns Council be voluntary.**

The reason for making Campaigns Council participation mandatory is a coordination problem. Again, without taking mutual responsibility for ensuring that the Campaigns Council is a useful forum, the Steering Committee and chapter formations will not have a successful body of this nature. **We propose to create an elected Campaigns Coordinator** per the suggestion of Rachel B. that would take responsibility for scheduling meetings and drafting an

agenda that will engage and involve these formations in cooperative work across the chapter. This individual could be held directly accountable.

Once every three months, the Campaigns Council would have a joint meeting with the Steering Committee where Steering members present could hear from the chapter stewards and make Steering-level decisions to facilitate cooperation between them.

In order to ensure that this convening of the external campaigns of the chapter and its elected political leadership is well-informed, and to provide reporting to the membership at large, **working groups and Priority Committees would be expected to prepare a standard report before every joint meeting including information about their activities, strategy, mission and membership.** These would be posted on a public forum available to all members of MDC DSA.

Some testimonies (Allison H., Helena K., Chad O.) raise the concern that reporting requirements and coordinative bodies will be unsuccessful unless assistance and training is provided to members and working groups. We also think this is a valid concern. **We propose that reporting requirements for working groups be suspended if such assistance and training is not provided to them.**

But we do think it is necessary to include reporting requirements and temporary and proportionate consequences if they are not met. Placing new, explicit, and mutual responsibilities on Steering and working groups - training and assistance to be provided by the former, reporting and collaboration to be provided by the latter - seems to be the closest thing possible to a consensus solution for achieving a nearly universal goal - one which is echoed by many members of Steering, the Administrative Committee, and working groups themselves.

We have laid out this section in the most detail because we recognize that this is a topic which has been the subject of an intense debate in MDC DSA. We think there is a consensus in favor of creating this sort of mutual accountability and connective tissue between chapter bodies, and that it would be irresponsible to ignore this desire in our report. But we also are proposing a considerably more moderate approach, informed by the concerns of sceptical voices, than has been debated by the chapter in the past.

## **Budget and Priorities**

A huge number of submissions (e.g. Oscar V., Irene K., Ryan M., John G.) expressed a desire to create a priorities process within the chapter. We are one of the few remaining large DSA chapters without any form of official priorities, and the commission was particularly moved by testimonies from people with experience in the Member Mobilizers program and Administrative Committee who reported that new members regularly are confused as to how to get involved in the chapter and there is no formal guidance on this issue.

**By setting democratic priorities we will be able to allocate funding and new volunteer resources to projects that are judged to be of crucial importance by the entire chapter. We do not propose to require these projects to alter their structure significantly. They will, however, have rights to additional funding, time and resources from the central chapter.**

Annual priorities will be set at Local Convention and may be added to over the year. A limit of five priorities will be set to ensure we do not simply prioritize everything at once.

The chapter's annual budget will be prepared by the Treasurer, in consultation with a reformed Finance Committee, and approved by the Steering Committee before being sent to the Local Convention to be finalized. The amount in the budget currently set aside for participatory budgeting will be reallocated to priorities, a participatory process which is more appropriate for non-state institutions without a large capital budget (per testimony of Brian W., Treasurer)



## Other chapter formations

**We found no consensus on changes to be made to caucuses. This section is left unchanged.**

**We eliminate the now-defunct Internal Organizing Committee and transfer its functions to the extremely active and capable Administrative Committee**, which has already been assigned these tasks as a contingency by the Steering Committee. A number of submissions from Administrative Committee members (e.g. Ryan M., Kristen H.) suggest that this is a task which they are more than capable of continuing to do.

We received assurances from the Secretary that no further changes were required to implement the ongoing internal restructuring of the Administrative Committee.

The Finance Committee is currently non-functional as a self-selecting body. We make it an appointed body similar to the Administrative Committee, permitting its potential future use by Treasurers in budget preparation without the worry of having to make sensitive member data available to a group which could potentially include unknown and unvetted individuals.

## Electoral Work and Endorsements

We are incredibly grateful to Irene K. and Stuart K., two of the chapter's most experienced electoral organizers, for producing a serious and credible proposal for reforming our political engagement processes. We have largely reproduced [their suggestions](#) in the bylaws text.

We unintentionally omitted a section in the preliminary text that would ensure that MDC DSA is not permitted to endorse multiple candidates for the same position. This amendment is largely non-controversial and has already been voted on by the chapter, obtaining overwhelming majority support but failing only due to missing quorum by several votes.

## Steering Accountability and Structure

We saw a strong consensus in favor of enshrining the principle that the chapter should speak in a single voice - that is, that **MDC DSA itself cannot be for and against the same thing at the same time, and that obligations incurred on behalf of the chapter as a whole should be approved either by all members or their elected representatives, and that decisions made by the general membership should supersede decisions of elected representatives where they conflict.**

We think that this principle will become increasingly important as the chapter grows larger and more powerful within the region, as Stuart K. and Irene K's testimony attests to in respect of electoral candidates.

**We also saw strong support from members of the Steering Committee for the formalization of the portfolios system.** The current Steering Committee, unlike previous Steering Committees, took on a specific division of labor, assigning responsibility for specific areas of current work and chapter development to each member. This has, by all accounts, resulted in a far more accountable and productive working environment internally.

We received testimony that the Steering Committee could be more transparent about its portfolios, and that it should also have reporting requirements. We agree with this. **The Steering Committee should be required to**

make a yearlong plan of work and descriptions of portfolios and their holders' name, last initial, and contact info available to all members within a month of taking office, and the Chair should be responsible for updating members at least every two months as to the plan of work's progress.

**In response to feedback asking for clarification, we are including more specificity about the definition of portfolios and the nature of the plan of work that Steering will be required to implement in the final bylaws text.**

## Branches

Branches will be required to use standard *terminology* to describe their steering committees and officers, while being permitted to vary their internal governance otherwise.

New branches will be provided with a standard charter which can be amended after **three** months.

We received testimony for and against Branch representation on the Steering Committee. We found consensus that enhanced participation rights for Branch representatives would be helpful but that granting voting rights to Branches could create a double-representation problem in which members in Montgomery County and Northern Virginia would be able to run for and vote for every other position on the Steering Committee in addition to their own carve-out seats.

Attempts to address this by allocating seats through geographical constituencies instead of at-large would make the current system of gender and racial quotas impossible to maintain and could have a deleterious impact on the cohesion of the chapter as a whole by removing the requirement for most of the Steering Committee to be accountable to the entire chapter.

**All branches will be able to appoint a Branch Delegate, effectively a non-voting member of the Steering Committee (and *ex officio* a member of the new Campaigns Council) with full participation rights, including attendance at executive sessions, and branches will have autonomy over the appointment or election procedures** per recommendation of Frank F. **In addition, after discussing the submission by several members of the Northern Virginia branch leadership regarding our preliminary report, we are clarifying that Branch steering committees will continue to have the right to send an alternate to represent them at public meetings of the chapter Steering Committee if the Delegate cannot attend.**

The right to electronic attendance and participation at in-person General Body Meetings will be secured to the greatest extent possible. We are deferring to the Administrative Committee and Steering Committee to work out the technical aspects of this, but wish to include language on the matter to ensure that it is clearly a requirement, given that this is an issue of significant concern not just to Branch members for whom travel is infeasible but also to a number of disabled members.

We believe that more work needs to be done on the issue of Branches. **We addressed some of the most important issues in this report, but the question of how to best represent and include all our members and fight for democratic socialism in the entire Metro DC region is still an open one.**

## Conclusion

This is not the last word on the bylaws. Members are still entitled to propose amendments and have them debated at this year's Local Convention, and undoubtedly will consider amendments in future conventions as well. However we believe that this consensus-based process has empowered members to consider a revision to the bylaws this year which meets the challenges we will face as a chapter over the coming years, and to have a better baseline for consideration at Convention than would have been achieved simply by considering piecemeal amendments to the

existing bylaws in a highly limited period of time, drafted without the intentional inclusion of varying points of view within the chapter. As a Commission, we believe that members should debate these bylaws and potentially amend them if they so choose, but we are united in the opinion that they represent a huge step forward on the current text.

**We invite continued participation and feedback by members in the #bylaws-reform channel on the chapter Slack, and the Convention Committee (chaired by Gabriel R.) will continue to notify members of opportunities to get involved in chapter discussions and forums about the bylaws.**

The proposed bylaws are attached below. Thank you for your engagement with this process.

## **Old Language**

[Linked here](#)

## **New Language**

### **1. National Affiliation**

Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America (hereinafter “MDCDSA”) is a local chapter of the national organization Democratic Socialists of America.

### **2. Membership**

#### **2.1 Definition**

Any person who pays dues to Democratic Socialists of America and who lives in, works in, or is otherwise able to attend meetings in the jurisdiction of MDCDSA as defined by the national organization, is not a member of any other chapter of DSA, and who supports the mission and values of the chapter shall be a member of the chapter. Members are entitled to participate in any campaigns, committees, and groups organized within the MDCDSA, except as otherwise set forth herein. Furthermore, any member in good standing may hold an elected or appointed position within MDCDSA.

#### **2.2 Code of Conduct**

MDCDSA members are expected to conduct oneself with civility and respect towards all other members. Unacceptable member behavior includes: creating an intimidating, offensive, and/or abusive environment for other members; engaging in undemocratic or disruptive behavior; engaging in any actions detrimental to the purpose or values of the organization.

#### **2.3 Suspension and Expulsion**

If a member’s conduct is found to be in substantial disagreement with the principles or policies, or violation of the aforementioned code of conduct of the organization, they will be subject to disciplinary action by the Steering Committee that may include suspension and/or expulsion from MDC DSA. Members facing suspension or expulsion must receive written notice of charges against them and must be given the opportunity to be heard before the Steering Committee. For a member to be suspended or expelled from MDC DSA, a two-thirds vote of the Steering

Committee shall be necessary. Decisions on expulsion by the Steering Committee may be appealed to the National Convention.

## **2.4 Donations and Dues**

The members may set up a pledge system, whereby anyone may make regular donations, which shall be separate from dues determined by national Democratic Socialists of America. All donations collected by the Chapter shall be retained by the Chapter.

## **2.5 Electronic Communications**

Unless members indicate otherwise to the Steering Committee, all communication with members required in these bylaws, including meeting notices, may be sent electronically.

## **3. Chapter Meetings**

Public meetings of the members shall be held on a regular basis, at least once a month, and The meeting shall be run according to the adopted parliamentary authority and other procedures approved by the members. A meeting of the members shall be defined as a General Body Meeting, Informational Meeting, Special Meeting, or Local Convention.

The General Body shall convene in a meeting of the members at least once a month at a regularly scheduled time and place, unless determined otherwise by the members. For the purposes of this section, “place” may include exclusively online meetings if this is deemed to be necessary for an extended period of time due to health and safety concerns.

### **3.1 General Body Meetings**

In the absence of a Local Convention, the members present and assembled at a General Body Meeting represent the General Body Membership and are the highest decision-making authority in the organization. The General Body Membership shall allow for the democratic introduction of proposals through a resolution process. Resolutions can be introduced by any member at a General Body Meeting (see section, titled “Resolution Process”).

#### **3.1.1 Resolution Process**

Resolutions may be adopted by the General Body at any scheduled general body meeting. Resolutions shall require a rationale, a statement of purpose in the form of Whereas clauses, and the action(s) to be taken by the Chapter in the form of Be It Resolved clauses.

All resolutions considered by the general body shall be put to the following process:

#### **First Read**

A resolution shall be put to a first read at any formally called meeting of the General Body, including General Body Meetings (voting meetings), Informational Meetings (non-voting meetings), Special Meetings, Strategy Forums, and

Local Conventions. Any member in good standing may introduce a resolution, so long as they meet the required definitions of a resolution. Members may ask clarifying questions about the introduced resolution, but may not propose amendments, move to a final debate, or vote on the resolution at its first read.

## Second Read

The Steering Committee shall debate the resolution and may propose amendments in an open meeting. Non-steering members present may debate and propose amendments as well. The Steering Committee is not empowered to place a resolution on hold and prevent a resolution from being sent to the Third Read. If a resolution isn't given a Second Read between GBMs, the resolution is exempt from the Second Read and is sent to the Third Read.

## Third Read

Final Debate, Amendment, and Vote: The purpose of the third read is to take a final vote on any resolution. Resolutions in the third read shall be put to a formal debate and final vote. Rules regarding deliberation shall follow the standard rules of order and any special rules of order adopted by the general body.

## Exceptions to the Three-Reader Process

Any resolution may bypass the first and second reading if it's considered an Emergency Resolution. To be considered an emergency resolution, the content and purpose of the resolution must be time-sensitive and of crucial importance that warrant the skipping of a one-month consideration period for a resolution. A 2/3rd vote of the Steering Committee or 3/4th vote of a General Body is required to deem a resolution an Emergency Resolution. Emergency Resolutions will follow the regular rules of order required for adoption by the General Body: a majority vote or 2/3rd vote depending on the type of resolution.

This process only applies to General Body Meetings. The process for resolutions at the Local Convention will be set by the Convention Rules.

### 3.1.2 Electronic Voting and Participation

The Steering Committee, with the assistance of the Administrative Committee will be responsible for ensuring that members may electronically attend in-person General Body Meetings and exercise their membership rights to the greatest extent that is logistically possible through electronic participation, without compromising members' security.

In order to be eligible for electronic voting, members must have joined DSA more than 30 days prior to the in-person meeting of the members or have attended the relevant in-person meeting of the members. This restriction does not apply to voting in person and does not apply to attendance or speaking rights.

Ballots will be issued electronically to members on General Body Meeting proposals up for vote. Position statements on votes will be accepted by the Administrative Committee beginning three days prior to the General Body Meeting and posted publicly, and will be included along with the electronic ballots sent to members if received with enough time to be included according to policies set by the Secretary. .

## Exceptions to Electronic Participation Rights

In exceptional circumstances, the Steering Committee may by two-thirds vote:

- shorten the online voting period,
- hold a General Body Meeting entirely in-person,
- put a proposal held at an entirely in-person meeting to in-person voting alone.

If the Steering Committee votes to restrict a given vote to in-person voting only, members present at the in-person vote may, with a two-thirds majority, override the Steering Committee and allow for a three-day electronic voting period following the meeting.

In consultation with the Administrative Committee, the Steering Committee may, by a two-thirds majority, postpone electronic voting should a credible security threat be discovered.

The Steering Committee will update the membership to the best of its ability, consistent with safeguarding and legal obligations, as to the rationale for invoking any of these exceptions as soon as is practicable.

### 3.1.4 Quorum

A quorum of 5% of the local membership is required for a general body meeting to transact business. If applicable, votes cast electronically shall count towards attaining quorum of the business to which it pertains to.

## 3.2 Informational Meetings

The Steering Committee may set chapter-wide Informational Meetings for a variety of reasons at which voting business will not be conducted and policies will not be set. For the purposes of these bylaws, chapter-wide Informational Meetings should not be considered General Body Meetings. Informational Meetings can serve as a first read for the resolutions process.

## 3.3 Special Meetings

By majority vote of the Steering Committee or petition of 5 percent of the Membership submitted to the Administrative Committee, the chapter may call a Special Meeting on at least seven days' notice when an urgent and important matter requires deliberation. No matters other than those listed in the meeting notice may be brought to or raised from the floor at a Special Meeting. Voting may be conducted at a Special Meeting on those matters listed in the meeting notice.

## 3.4 Local Conventions

The Metro DC chapter of DSA ("MDCDSA") will hold a Local Convention each year.

The Local Convention will debate an annual budget introduced by the Treasurer and approved by the Steering Committee; priorities resolutions introduced by members; amendments to the chapter bylaws; and other such resolutions as may be introduced. Delegates will also elect a Steering Committee under rules set out in section 5.

To be eligible to vote as a delegate in the MDCDSA Local Convention, individuals must be (and remain) a member of MDCDSA in good standing for 30 days before the convention. All processes for voting, introducing resolutions, and other administrative affairs pertinent to a Local Convention not specified in these bylaws shall be governed by Convention Rules approved for that Convention.

Bylaws Amendments passed at the Local Convention will become binding on all chapter bodies as of 90 days following the date of the Local Convention. This language is not intended to preclude earlier implementation of amendments by the Steering Committee.

All Priority Resolutions expire at Local Convention. New Priority Resolutions may be passed by two-thirds vote at Local Convention or a General Body Meeting. No more than five Priority Resolutions may be in effect at once.

### **3.5 Urgent Matters**

Urgent matters that would regularly require a General Body Meeting vote may be voted on by the Steering Committee and, if adopted, be put to a ratification vote by a majority or two-thirds vote as the bylaws require, at the next voting meeting. This section will not apply to electoral endorsements.

## **4. Endorsements**

The Steering Committee, in consultation with the Political Engagement Committee, will set two General Body Meetings per year, on a regular schedule, in which a resolution to endorse an electoral candidate within the jurisdiction of Metro DC DSA may be debated and voted upon.

Endorsement resolutions may be introduced for a first read at the monthly meeting of the members immediately prior to this meeting, and require a sponsor and four co-sponsors.

The Political Engagement Committee may set requirements, which must apply to all candidates equally, before an endorsement resolution may be introduced and/or voted on, such as filling out chapterwide and jurisdiction-specific questionnaires and attending chapterwide or jurisdiction-specific forums.

An endorsement resolution will require a two-thirds vote in favor to pass.

A resolution to unendorse or censure an endorsed candidate may be debated through the ordinary resolutions process. It will require a simple majority vote to censure a candidate, and a two-thirds vote to unendorse a candidate.

If multiple candidates running for the same elected office seek MDCDSA's endorsement, then the chapter shall vote to endorse one of these candidates in two phases.

1. In the first phase, the chapter shall vote on one candidate among those candidates for whom a chapter member has introduced an endorsement resolution.

In the case of two candidates, this contest shall be a head-to-head vote with a plurality winner (i.e. the candidate with 50%+1 wins). In the case of more than two candidates, this contest shall be a ranked choice vote counted using the single transferable vote method.

2. In the second phase, the chapter shall take an approval vote on the endorsement of the candidate that wins the contest in phase one. In accordance with the first paragraph of this section, if the winner of phase one

receives two-thirds of the approval votes of those members present and voting, then that candidate receives a chapter endorsement.

The two-phase endorsement process shall not take place if there are more than or an equal number of seats available for one elected office as there are candidates running and seeking our chapter's endorsement for that office.

The Political Engagement Committee shall be permitted to issue a recommendation and rationale as a body, to be delivered by its Chair or their designee, before or during debates on electoral endorsements and will be allotted additional speaking time if requested to deliver findings from their engagement with the candidate. This recommendation and rationale will be included along with ballots sent to members.

By a two-thirds majority of the Steering Committee, additional meetings of the members may be designated in which endorsement business may be transacted.

#### Non-endorsed Candidates

Chapter resources, social media, communications platforms may not be used by members or any chapter body to solicit for donations or volunteers on behalf of a non-endorsed candidate, publicize events hosted or sponsored by a non-endorsed candidate, or ask for other forms of support for a non-endorsed candidate.

This section will not preclude members from advocating internally for or against an endorsement, sharing newsworthy information about candidates for office, or making good-faith informational inquiries about a candidate. This section will be interpreted on a discretionary basis by the individual(s) responsible for moderating content on a particular platform.

## 5. Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern MDCDSA in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order that MDCDSA may adopt. The parliamentary authority of MDCDSA shall be adopted by the Steering Committee and the General Body

## 6. Chapter Formations

### 6.1 Permanent Committees

#### 6.1.1 Campaigns Council

The Campaigns Council is a comprehensive board and gathering space of Working Groups and Priority Campaigns. The Council will be responsible for providing both visibility across MDC DSA's various campaigns and updates on campaign progress to the broader MDC DSA membership.

The Campaigns Council will be chaired by the Campaigns Coordinator. Working Groups and Priority Campaigns will be represented by two Stewards each. All members of the Steering Committee, including Branch delegates, will sit on the Campaigns Council *ex officio*. There will be a channel for Campaigns Council members on the chapter Slack to promote inter-formation discussion and notification between meetings.



The Campaigns Council will assemble as either an ordinary meeting or a joint meeting with the Steering Committee.

Joint meetings with the Steering Committee will take place once per quarter. Steering Committee resolutions and decisions can be made by majority vote of the Steering Committee members present during these meetings, which will be treated as meetings of both the Steering Committee and the Campaigns Council for the purposes of activity requirements. Stewards will have the same speaking and participation rights as Branch delegates at joint meetings, including participation in closed sessions.

Ordinary meetings will comprise all other Campaigns Council meetings. The Campaigns Coordinator will set the agenda for ordinary meetings after consulting and soliciting agenda items from Stewards.

The Campaigns Council will serve as a forum for discussion of Working Group and Priority Campaigns priorities, plans, opportunities for coordination, and opportunities for member mobilization. The Campaigns Council will also serve as a space to share best organizing practices and resources as well as to mediate disagreements between chapter formations.

### 6.1.2 Administrative Committee

The Administrative Committee shall be a Permanent Committee chaired by the Secretary. Any member of the general body may be nominated by the Secretary to be vetted and approved by a majority vote of the Steering Committee. All members of the Steering Committee will automatically be members of the Administrative Committee.

The Administrative Committee shall be responsible for the following duties:

- maintaining a register of all binding and non-binding policies passed by a vote of the Steering Committee, a General Body Meeting, or a Local Convention;
- maintaining a full list of all members of MDCDSA (Member List) as defined by the bylaws;
- assisting in the function of and maintaining minutes of all general body and steering committee meetings of MDCDSA, in a fashion accessible to the general body membership;
- facilitating communications between MDCDSA and parties external to MDCDSA, subject to the discretion of the Steering Committee and the General Body;
- creating membership recruitment and retention plans, with an intentional focus on developing a diverse and representative membership;
- overseeing training and duties of Member Mobilizers, who will act as internal organizers within the chapter to ensure high participation, understanding, and respect among MDCDSA members;
- onboarding new members and helping them understand the internal structure of MDCDSA, what resources are available to them, and who to reach out to for those resources;
- overseeing MDCDSA training programs to train members in grassroots organizing and campaigning, with an intentional focus on developing a diverse and representative layer of chapter organizers and leaders;
- assisting chapter formations in planning events, actions and other activities.

The Steering Committee or General Body may direct the Administrative Committee to assume more duties on their behalf. The Steering Committee may delegate oversight of certain Administrative Committee responsibilities to portfolios held by at-large members.

### 6.1.3 Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall be a Permanent Committee chaired by the Treasurer. Any member of the general body may be nominated by the Treasurer to be vetted and approved by a majority vote of the Steering Committee. All members of the Steering Committee will automatically be members of the Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee is responsible for the financial organization of the chapter, including but not limited to fundraising activities for the chapter, compliance with any financial regulations the chapter is subject to, and maintenance of transparent financial reports, available to the entire membership upon request.

The Finance Committee will assist the Treasurer in the preparation of the Treasurer's budget proposal, which will be submitted to the Steering Committee for amendment and approval before it is introduced and debated at the Local Convention.

At the end of each fiscal year, the Finance Committee will present a report and analysis to the Steering Committee of expenditures and revenues, including a brief forecast for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Steering Committee may, at its discretion, delegate responsibility for overseeing the Finance Committee's fundraising activities to a member of the Finance Committee.

The Fiscal Year shall commence the first day of January in each year.

### 6.1.4 Political Engagement Committee

The Political Engagement Committee is chaired by an at-large member of the Steering Committee appointed by vote of the Steering Committee. Two additional members of the Steering Committee and two non-members of the Steering Committee will be appointed by the Steering Committee to serve as members of the Political Engagement Committee.

At least one member of the Political Engagement Committee must be resident in each of Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia.

The Political Engagement Committee will be responsible for coordinating the recruitment, and vetting of candidates for chapter endorsement. When endorsement resolutions are being debated, the Political Engagement Committee shall be entitled to present a recommendation to the general body, and will be granted additional speaking time where necessary to explain its rationale.

The Political Engagement Committee will distribute questionnaires approved by the General Body to candidates and provide information about the chapter's endorsement process. It will also regularly review candidate questionnaires and propose additions and changes to the General Body to reflect emergent political developments and priorities.

The Political Engagement Committee will review candidate questionnaires and may propose additions or amendments to the General Body Meeting to deal with emerging issues or developments in politics.

The Political Engagement Committee will compile requirements and deadlines involved in the endorsement process into a public, reader-friendly document which will be approved by the Steering Committee. Once this is complete, the document will be updated on a regular basis to reflect any changes to the process or new dates and deadlines set for future endorsement meetings.

The Political Engagement Committee will assist the Steering Committee and Priority Campaigns in legislative advocacy efforts.

The Political Engagement Committee will oversee campaign activities for electoral work within the chapter. It may delegate responsibility for such activities to campaign structures it establishes but all such structures are subject to the decisions of the Political Engagement Committee.

## **6.2 Working Groups**

Working Groups shall be formed whenever five dues paying MDCDSA members come together around a shared vision of work, as long as its mission and activities, a proposal for which will be submitted in brief to the Administrative Committee as part of formation, do not violate the bylaws.

Working Groups may be issue or campaign-based, and shall be responsible for keeping the Steering Committee and the membership informed of the Working Groups' projects, including through the Stewards program and by submitting a standard report before each joint meeting of the Campaigns Council and Steering Committee once every three months. These reports will be posted on a public forum accessible to all members by the Administrative Committee and may be discussed at the aforementioned joint meeting.

Working Groups will establish their own internal structure, which should include the election or appointment of two Stewards who will serve as official points of contact for internal chapter bodies and officers and representatives on the Campaigns Council, in addition to any other duties which might be assigned to them by the Working Group.

If neither Working Group Steward attends two consecutive Campaigns Council meetings, or a standard report is not provided before a joint meeting of the Campaigns Council and Steering Committee, the Steering Committee may set temporary and discretionary limits on the Working Group's access to the chapter website, social media and resources until the situation which caused the limitations to be imposed is rectified by the submission of a report, attendance at a Campaigns Council meeting, or both.

If the Campaigns Council meets more than once in a calendar month, attendance at one such meeting will be considered sufficient for the above activity requirements. Working Groups whose activity is contained exclusively within a single Branch are exempt from reporting and attendance requirements but may submit reports and nominate Stewards if they choose.

It is the Steering Committee's duty to ensure assistance is provided to Working Groups and Stewards where requested to facilitate the production of reports. Failure to provide resources and training will negate consequences for any failure of a Working Group to submit a report.

If the Steering Committee finds the activities of a Working Group violates the mission and/or bylaws of the chapter, they shall have the authority to halt its activities until it can be approved at the next general body meeting. Any Working Group may be dissolved by a majority of its members, when it fails to have five active dues paying members, been inactive for more than one year, or at a general body meeting by a vote of two-thirds of the members present.

## **6.3 Priority Campaigns**

Priority Campaigns are created by Priority Resolutions passed at Local Conventions or General Body Meetings through the promotion of existing chapter formations to this status, and will revert to their previous status if the priority is not renewed upon expiration.

These formations will retain their existing internal structure unless they choose to restructure themselves upon becoming a Priority Campaign.

New members will be encouraged to join Priority Campaigns by Member Mobilizers and other representatives of the chapter. Priority Campaigns are requested to regularly provide an updated list of individuals who are currently willing to provide assistance to new members in becoming active in their work.

The Treasurer will set aside one-third of the chapter's annual budget for a Priorities Budget which may only be used by Priority Campaigns.

Priority Campaigns may be granted preferential access to other limited chapter resources in policies established by the Administrative Committee.

Priority Campaigns are required to meet, at a minimum, the same reporting requirements as Working Groups and must appoint at least two Stewards. The Steering Committee may enhance reporting requirements for Priority Campaigns.

The Campaigns Coordinator may at their discretion hold a special meeting which is limited to Priority Campaign Stewards and members of the Steering Committee. This will be considered equivalent to a meeting of the Campaigns Council for the purposes of attendance requirements.

## **6.4 Branches**

A branch is a group of members in a locality who organize to perform work in their community.

### **6.4.1 Formation**

An exploratory committee for establishment of a branch may be commissioned upon a majority vote of the Steering Committee, consisting of such members as the Steering Committee shall appoint at its discretion.

An exploratory committee desiring to form a branch shall adopt a model charter approved by the Steering Committee and elect proposed officers in accordance therewith, model charters may not be revised within the first three months of adoption. Thereafter, model charters may be amended by an exploratory committee with the approval of the Chapter Steering Committee.

The branch shall be established upon ratification of the charter and the initial election of officers. Ratification of the charter shall require a two-thirds vote of members present and voting at a meeting of the members of the MDCDSA, at which point the exploratory committee will be dissolved.

### **6.4.2 Charter and Powers**

The charter of a branch shall set forth, at a minimum: the powers delegated to the branch, a defined geographic territory, the size of the Branch Steering Committee, a list of officers (including a Chair or Co-Chairs and a Secretary) and their responsibilities, and procedures for the election and removal of officers.

A charter of a branch may be amended once a branch has been in existence for six months, either by a two-thirds vote of members present at a meeting of the members of the MDCDSA or, alternatively, by application of the branch subject to ratification by a three-fifths vote of the Steering Committee.

Neither the branch nor any officer thereof shall have the power to enter into contracts, make expenditures, or assume financial obligations on behalf of the branch or MDCDSA except as specifically authorized in accordance with the Bylaws.

Branches may, in accordance with their Charter, make statements, join coalitions, and offer commentary on political matters exclusively within their territorial jurisdiction (including statements on ballot initiatives but not candidate endorsements), but will clearly identify themselves as that specific Branch rather than MDCDSA as a whole unless they have received the approval of the Steering Committee, General Body Meeting, or Local Convention of MDCDSA for its inclusion.

Branch Steering Committees shall be permitted to issue a recommendation and rationale on candidates running for seats exclusively within their territorial jurisdiction during endorsement General Body Meetings. This recommendation and rationale will be included along with ballots sent to members.

#### 6.4.3 Membership

Any member of MDCDSA shall be eligible to be a member of a branch if they live or work within that branch's territory. No member of MDCDSA shall be a member of more than one branch at any time.

#### 6.4.4 Accountability

A meeting of the members of the MDCDSA may, on a two-thirds vote of members present and voting, dissolve a branch, dismiss an officer of a branch, or dissolve an exploratory committee.

#### 6.4.5 Branch Funds

If a Chartered Branch conducts a fundraiser for a particular purpose, they shall deposit these funds in the Chapter accounts as directed by the treasurer. The treasurer shall keep a ledger of Chartered Branch deposits and those deposits shall only be disbursed with the consent of the Chartered Branch leadership.

### 6.5 Caucuses

Members may self-organize temporary or permanent caucuses according to shared interests, affinities, and/or political goals. The objectives of a caucus may include – but are not limited to – advocating for candidates in internal MDC DSA elections, supporting the adoption of specific campaigns or initiatives for the GBM to take up, or for a redress of grievances. Caucuses shall have the right to determine their own membership.

A caucus may choose whether or not they would like formal recognition. To gain formal status, a caucus shall submit a mission statement that includes the name and purpose of the caucus, as well as any restrictions on eligibility for membership in the Caucus, signed by no less than five members in good standing. The Secretary will be responsible for confirming the membership status of all signatories, and notifying the Steering Committee of recognition.

Formal recognition guarantees that the caucus shall be listed on the Metro DC DSA website, along with their name, vision statement, and a point of contact. Recognized caucuses shall have the right to publish statements and proposals in public forums for the Local, subject to the moderation of the moderation team of that forum.

The right for a caucus of the Local to establish formal or informal relationships with other caucuses composed of DSA Local or National members shall not be infringed or regulated by the Steering Committee. Caucuses shall have the right to determine their own internal structure, except where it is in violation of any bylaws or policies regarding member conduct.

## **7. Steering Committee and Officers**

### **7.1 Collective Responsibilities**

The Steering Committee is the highest elected body of Metro DC DSA, and is the political leadership of the chapter when the membership is not assembled, subordinate to the Bylaws as well as resolutions passed by members at General Body Meetings and Local Conventions which may overturn its decisions.

The Steering Committee is not permitted to overturn decisions of the General Body Meeting or Local Convention.

The Steering Committee is empowered to arbitrate any disputes between chapter formations that may arise.

In order to ensure the chapter speaks in one voice, statements or endorsements by chapter members or formations that could reasonably be interpreted as creating a new obligation or position for MDC DSA as a whole must be approved by the Steering Committee, a General Body Meeting, or the Local Convention.

Public commentary by members and chapter formations in relation to established MDC DSA policies, campaigns, and objectives does not require Steering Committee approval.

The Steering Committee is empowered to interpret and enforce the Code of Conduct and such powers as are delegated to it by the Bylaws.

Written internal guidance will be provided to members and formation Stewards by the Steering Committee where there is any doubt as to the interpretation of the bylaws or chapter policies. Such guidance may be amended (or new guidance issued) by majority vote of the General Body Meeting or Local Convention and will be made available to all members for internal review in a timely fashion.

### **7.2 Elections and Terms**

The voting members of the Steering Committee will be elected by delegates at the Local Convention each year through a secret electronic ballot.

No person may hold more than one office but an individual may run for both an officer position and an at-large position; if an individual is elected to an officer position they will be eliminated from the at-large election.

The Treasurer, Secretary and Campaigns Coordinator will be elected separately by ranked-choice voting, and eight at-large members will be elected on a single ballot by the approval voting method.

A majority of voting members of the Steering Committee must identify as women, people of color, and/or non-binary. If the result of an election would result in a violation of this rule, the highest-ranking individuals who fulfil one of these criteria will be elected instead of the lowest-ranking individuals who fulfil none of the criteria until it is no longer in violation.

A special election will be held to replace a Steering Committee member who resigns or is removed more than two months prior to a Local Convention.

Each Branch is entitled to designate one non-voting Branch delegate to the Steering Committee through a procedure established in its charter. If a Branch does not have a procedure established in its charter, the Branch Steering Committee may select the delegate itself or establish a voting procedure. In the absence of the Branch delegate, the Branch steering committee may appoint an alternate with the speaking privileges and powers of the Branch delegate for the public meetings of the Chapter Steering Committee.

### **7.3 Size**

The Steering Committee will comprise eleven voting members and a number of non-voting Branch delegates equal to the current number of Branches.

### **7.4 Chair**

The Chair shall be the chief executive officer of MDCDSA, and shall ensure that all orders and resolutions of the members and the Steering Committee are carried out. The Chair shall be elected by the Steering Committee from among their members. In the event of a vacancy, whether resulting from death, resignation or otherwise, the Steering Committee shall elect a new chair.

The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Steering Committee and shall sign or countersign all certificates, contracts or other instruments of MDCDSA except where otherwise designated in these bylaws. The Chair shall perform such other duties as are incident to the office required of them by the Steering Committee.

### **7.5 Treasurer**

The Treasurer shall, as directed by the Steering Committee, have care and custody of the general funds, securities, properties, and assets of the MDCDSA. The Treasurer shall ensure that the funds and securities shall be deposited in the bank(s), trust companies or depositories that the Steering Committee shall designate.

At the direction of the Steering Committee, the Treasurer will ensure disbursement and disposal of the same, taking proper voucher for such disbursements.

They shall ensure that accurate books of account are kept in accordance with commonly accepted accounting principles, recording therein the amount of all monies, funds, securities, properties and assets in their custody, wherever located, and showing the amount of disbursement made and the disposition of properties. They shall exhibit said books and records when required by the Steering Committee, Chair or Co-Chairs, or government agency of appropriate regulator jurisdiction pursuant to law.

They shall prepare—in consultation with the Steering Committee – a one-year budget, to be presented and voted on at the Local Convention. They shall prepare a yearly financial report for presentation at a Chapter Meeting in December.

The Treasurer will be assisted in these duties where appropriate by the Finance Committee, which they will chair.

### **7.6 Secretary**

The Secretary shall ensure that the minutes are kept of the meetings of the Steering Committee and of the general membership and shall ensure that the minutes are distributed. The Secretary shall see that all notices are duly given in accordance with the provisions of these Bylaws or as required by law. The Secretary shall be custodian of all MDCDSA records. The Secretary shall keep a register of the address, phone number and e-mail address of each member of the Steering Committee, which shall be furnished to the Secretary by each Steering Committee member. The Secretary shall, in general, perform the duties incident to the office of Secretary and such other duties as are from time to time assigned by the Chair, or by the Steering Committee.

The Secretary will be assisted in these duties where appropriate by the Administrative Committee, which they will chair.

### **7.7 Campaigns Coordinator**

The Campaigns Coordinator will seek to promote collaboration and coordination between chapter formations engaged in external organizing, and is responsible for chairing the Campaigns Council, scheduling its meetings, and drafting its agenda in consultation with Stewards.

The Campaigns Coordinator will ensure the participation of chapter bodies in the Stewards Program and oversee reporting requirements for Working Groups and Priority Campaigns.

### **7.8 Portfolios, Plan of Work, and Reporting Requirements**

A portfolio is a division of responsibility that may be assigned to one or more members of the Steering Committee but is accountable to the policies and decisions of the committee as a whole. Portfolios established by each Steering Committee must be approved and appear on the chapter website within a month of the new Steering Committee taking office. This will include, at a minimum, the responsibilities of the portfolio, any chapter bodies requested to use this member as an internal point of contact, the member's first name and last initial, and an email address and/or phone number through which they can be reached.

Portfolios may include oversight, administration or control over existing chapter functions as well as responsibility for establishing or promoting new initiatives as part of the Steering Committee's plan of work.

Branch delegates are not required to take on a portfolio but may be assigned one, with their consent, by the Steering Committee. If a Branch delegate takes on a portfolio they will be held accountable to carrying it out in the same way as any other Steering Committee member.

Taking into consideration its responsibilities, portfolios, approved resolutions, and priority campaigns passed at the Local Convention, the Steering Committee shall draft a plan of work that will help guide its activities for its term. A plan of work established by each Steering Committee must be approved and appear on an online portal available to all members within a month of the new Steering Committee taking office.

The Chair or their designate will be responsible for delivering an update to the membership on the progress of the plan of work and the Steering Committee's activities in a chapter-wide email, Informational Meeting, and/or General Body Meeting at least every two months.

### **7.9 Removal**

Any Officer or member of the Steering Committee may resign in writing. The Chair may resign without ceding their place on the Steering Committee.

Members of the Steering Committee will be removed for nonfeasance if they:



- Do not maintain a minimum 50% participation rate in online Steering Committee votes as calculated on a three calendar month rolling window, or
- Miss three consecutive meetings without an acceptable reason, or
- Miss ten cumulative meetings within their current term without an acceptable reason.

Enforcement of the above section will take place through majority vote of the Steering Committee, or member petition as outlined below.

Members of the Steering Committee may take leaves of absence after notifying those most affected and making efforts to ensure continuity of chapter functions, and will be permitted to return to their previous position afterwards. Policies in this regard may be set by the Steering Committee or General Body Meeting. Votes or meetings missed during a leave of absence will not count towards the above criteria.

Members of the Steering Committee may be removed for reasons other than nonfeasance, including malfeasance, gross incompetence, or violations of the Code of Conduct, by a two-thirds vote of the members of the Steering Committee.

The next General Body Meeting must debate any member petition to remove a member or members of the Steering Committee signed by 10% of the chapter membership in good standing and submitted to the Administrative Committee, who will be responsible for verifying the membership of the signatories. A vote to remove a member will require a two-thirds vote in favor at this meeting.

## **7.10 Meetings**

Meetings of the Steering Committee may take place either online or in person, but the option to observe and fully participate remotely must be provided for in person meetings to all who would otherwise be eligible to do so. The Steering Committee may close a meeting by two-thirds vote. Branch delegates will have the right to participate in closed meetings.

The Steering Committee may conduct votes on matters via electronic means.

All minutes of the Steering Committee's meetings shall be posted on a public forum accessible to all members, including records of votes taken.

## **8. Bylaws Changes**

Members shall have the power to approve changes to the Bylaws. Changes may be adopted by a vote of two-thirds of the members present. In order to amend the bylaws of MDCDSA in the absence of a Local Convention, language must be introduced at the monthly meeting of the members prior to the monthly meeting at which members will vote on the amendment in question.

## **9. Dissolution**

MDC DSA may be dissolved by motion approved by three-fifths of the Steering Committee, which is then approved by a 2/3 vote of the general membership. Any vote at the steering committee regarding dissolution must have all members of the steering committee present, and the vote total of the membership must represent at least 50% of the current members of MDCDSA. The Steering Committee shall ensure that an appropriate agent is designated to complete the dissolution of the organization. Said agent shall ensure that all financial and legal issues are properly resolved.

## **Amendment to Amendment 1: Bylaws Section 3.1.1 – Resolution Process**

Sponsor: Brad C. & Irene K.

### **Reasoning**

The chapter's three-reader process, while well-intentioned to promote informed voting and to ensure that all sides of every competitive vote have a chance to present their best case to the membership, has slowed down the operations of the chapter and shown that it is no longer the best way to conduct chapter business. This amendment seeks to reduce the three-reader process to a two-reader process for two key reasons:

First, the chapter ought to be able to act as quickly as possible while preserving an informed and democratic process. Events on the ground often change very quickly, and every minute we unnecessarily dawdle on things like candidate endorsements we lose our ability to have the greatest impact on elections and the political climate of our region. Furthermore, resolutions appropriating funds being caught in limbo for weeks or months either hinder the opportunity of working groups and campaigns to be as effective as possible or unfairly leave comrades shouldering financial burdens that the chapter ought to take on.

Second, the movement to completely online voting (and, for the time being, online meeting) and the introduction of statements for and against all resolutions have obviated the stated need for three-reader in the first place. No longer can a resolution be introduced and voted on in the course of the same meeting and deprive the chapter of valuable time for debate and education on the issue at hand.

### **Old Language**

#### 3.1.1 Resolution Process

Resolutions may be adopted by the General Body at any scheduled general body meeting. Resolutions shall require a rationale, a statement of purpose in the form of Whereas clauses, and the action(s) to be taken by the Chapter in the form of Be It Resolved clauses.

All resolutions considered by the general body shall be put to the following process:

#### First Read

A resolution shall be put to a first read at any formally called meeting of the General Body, including General Body Meetings (voting meetings), Informational Meetings (non-voting meetings), Special Meetings, Strategy Forums, and Local Conventions. Any member in good standing may introduce a resolution, so long as they meet the required definitions of a resolution. Members may ask clarifying questions about the introduced resolution, but may not propose amendments, move to a final debate, or vote on the resolution at its first read.

#### Second Read

The Steering Committee shall debate the resolution and may propose amendments in an open meeting. Non-steering members present may debate and propose amendments as well. The Steering Committee is not empowered to place a resolution on hold and prevent a resolution from being sent to the Third Read. If a resolution isn't given a Second Read between GBMs, the resolution is exempt from the Second Read and is sent to the Third Read.

## Third Read

**Final Debate, Amendment, and Vote:** The purpose of the third read is to take a final vote on any resolution. Resolutions in the third read shall be put to a formal debate and final vote. Rules regarding deliberation shall follow the standard rules of order and any special rules of order adopted by the general body.

### Exceptions to the Three-Reader Process

Any resolution may bypass the first and second reading if it's considered an Emergency Resolution. To be considered an emergency resolution, the content and purpose of the resolution must be time-sensitive and of crucial importance that warrant the skipping of a one-month consideration period for a resolution. A 2/3rd vote of the Steering Committee or 3/4th vote of a General Body is required to deem a resolution an Emergency Resolution. Emergency Resolutions will follow the regular rules of order required for adoption by the General Body: a majority vote or 2/3rd vote depending on the type of resolution.

This process only applies to General Body Meetings. The process for resolutions at the Local Convention will be set by the Convention Rules.

## **New Language**

### 3.1.1 Resolution Process

Resolutions may be adopted by the General Body at any scheduled general body meeting. Resolutions shall require a rationale, a statement of purpose in the form of Whereas clauses, and the action(s) to be taken by the Chapter in the form of Be It Resolved clauses.

All resolutions considered by the general body shall be put to the following process:

#### First Read

The Steering Committee shall debate the resolution and may propose amendments in an open meeting. Non-steering members present may debate and propose amendments as well. The Steering Committee is not empowered to place a resolution on hold and prevent a resolution from being sent to the Second Read.

#### Second Read

**Final Debate, Amendment, and Vote:** The purpose of the third read is to take a final vote on any resolution. Resolutions in the third read shall be put to a formal debate and final vote. Rules regarding deliberation shall follow the standard rules of order and any special rules of order adopted by the general body.

### Exceptions to the Three-Reader Process

Any resolution may bypass the first reading if it's considered an Emergency Resolution. To be considered an emergency resolution, the content and purpose of the resolution must be time-sensitive and of crucial importance that warrant the skipping of a one-month consideration period for a resolution. A 2/3rd vote of the Steering Committee or 3/4th vote of a General Body is required to deem a resolution an Emergency Resolution. Emergency Resolutions will follow the regular rules of order required for adoption by the General Body: a majority vote or 2/3rd vote depending on the type of resolution.

This process only applies to General Body Meetings. The process for resolutions at the Local Convention will be set by the Convention Rules.

## **Amendment to Amendment 1: Adding Sections Formations to Bylaws**

Sponsor: Ryan M. & Paola S.

### **Reasoning**

The purpose of this amendment is to reconcile a consistent issue in the chapter over the past year. Our bylaws do not have a good format for members who want to organize around a shared identity/ affinity but who do not want to be a working group, which would require them to be organized around a specific issue or campaign. In such instances, members organize into caucuses. However, our bylaws (correctly) create a clear firewall between the chapter and the work of caucuses. The reason for this is because caucuses are intended to be protected internal organizing activity within the chapter that the chapter can't disrupt or influence. This guarantees members a right to advocate for a specific point of view. The issue is that this independence also means that caucuses are not allowed to take advantage of chapter resources, funding or get dedicated support from the chapter in any form. This is appropriate because caucuses are by design unaccountable to the chapter in order to guarantee their right to organize internally. However this becomes an issue when comrades organize a caucus where the chapter would want to give them support. This has already been an issue that has come up with identity caucuses over the past year. This amendment resolves this by creating a third option, only available to identity groups, to form a "section." A section would have the same rights and requirements as working groups except in two major respects. First, they would not be required to be organized around a specific issue or campaign like working groups are, and second they would have control over their membership, whereas working groups are required to be open to all members. Identity groups that would rather organize as caucuses than sections will not be required to do so. This is an "opt-in" process where members are able to form how they want, but for those that do want to have access to chapter resources and support have an option to be able to do that.

### **New Language**

#### **6.6 Sections**

Sections are formations in the chapter for the purpose of creating a shared space for members of a common identity, but unlike working groups are not dedicated to a specific campaign or policy issue. "Common identities" may include, but are not necessarily limited to, protected classes under federal law such as gender, race, ethnicity, or national identity.

Section may petition for recognition by submitting an application to the steering committee including no less than five MDCDSA members, a mission statement, and bylaws. Sections have the same rights and expectations as Working Groups as outlined in these bylaws, except where it may be inconsistent with this article, such as in the approval process. Sections are entitled to have criteria for which chapter members are eligible to join, which must be enumerated in their bylaws. Sections will communicate to Steering Campaigns Council liaison who are their contact points and what is the leadership structure of the section upon their formal recognition so that the section may be included in communications and have a direct line for requesting support.