

Democratize Everything

The LSC Platform For Freedom, Socialism, And Democracy

DSA Libertarian Socialist Caucus

September 28, 2018

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The apathy and despair endemic to our culture are symptoms of the powerlessness people experience over their lives. Our workplaces are dictatorships run by the same bosses whose bribes determine our political leadership. The police, the courts, the media, and all of society's major institutions are under the control of self-appointed elites who use them to shut ordinary people out of all important decision-making. In every aspect of our lives — our neighborhoods as much as our workplaces, our civil society as much as our elected government — a shrinking minority has near complete control over our world.

Over the last eighteen months, the Democratic Socialists of America has become a potent challenge to this established order. From seeds lying dormant under the snow to green shoots emerging after the first spring thaw, a newly invigorated socialist movement is now developing. We, the Libertarian Socialist Caucus of DSA, are encouraged by the potential of this growing movement, and we recognize that we cannot follow the same rutted paths left by our predecessors, but must instead learn from their mistakes and avoid the pitfalls they have marked for us.

Our fight is not merely about certain policies, but about the power to shape policy; our task is not simply to guarantee some essential services, but to wrest power over the conditions of our lives.

Democracy is something that has been kept from us:

- To democratize is to provide the means for every end that unites people, but is denied us by our rulers;
- To democratize is to provide a lever for our common interests as workers, as neighbors, and in whatever formation we deem it necessary or convenient to act;
- To democratize is to empower every person, awakening in each of us the latent sense of our needs, hopes, and dreams, and obligating us to listen to one another with the respect that must accompany empowerment.

Libertarian socialists believe that a program which does not affirm **radical democracy as both a means and an end in itself** will suffer from a number of critical faults, among them:

1. Even the simplest demands are only petitions if we do not have the power to enact them.
2. Even the most charismatic and sympathetic elected representatives are still left unaccountable by the existing political system, leaving us alienated from the decisions that structure our daily lives.
3. Even a program which succeeds in guaranteeing us some necessities still leaves us alienated from our labor, community, and environment, while dependent on the powers above us. This exposes us to conditions not of our choosing, and stifles the development of creative, equitable solutions for ourselves and our communities, which is the cornerstone of a free and equal society.

For these faults, we offer a remedy, which we begin to outline in this program:

Democratize Everything.

Who Is The Libertarian Socialist Caucus?

From our founding statement:

The Libertarian Socialist Caucus is an organization of members of the Democratic Socialists of America who believe that libertarian socialist values are the fullest embodiment of this democratic socialist vision. We cherish the DSA's status as a multi-tendency mass socialist organization and wish to create a space within the DSA to discuss and organize for the development of socialism beyond the state. (dsa-lsc.org, 2017)

The Libertarian Socialist Caucus operates on three shared principles we see as inseparable from libertarian socialism:

1. **FREEDOM** refers to the positive capacity of all individuals and communities for self-determination. We believe that the freedom enjoyed by individuals is an inalienable social good and can only be strengthened through solidarity and democracy.
2. **SOLIDARITY** refers to the understanding that all oppressed people — both the economically exploited and the politically marginalized — share a common struggle towards a free and equal society. We aim to organize our movements accordingly, providing mutual aid and support to one another and deferring to those most affected by decisions, on the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all.
3. **DEMOCRACY** refers to collective decision-making free from hierarchy, domination, and coercion. Democracy is a process of both leading and being led in turn, a social relation between free individuals that should not be reduced solely to institutions or elections. We believe that democracy is always a “work in progress” to be altered or improved by communities according to their needs.

Organizational Transformation

DSA is nothing without its membership, and we cannot imagine shared ownership of society without a shared sense of ownership in our own organization. Our vision of democracy encompasses more than periodic election of representatives. Members need detailed information about the activities and upcoming decisions of the organization and should have access to mechanisms for affecting those decisions. We propose these transformations to bring increased democracy to DSA:

1. The NPC and NPC Steering Committee must be **transparent to members**. Minutes of meetings must be released promptly, with a set timeframe prescribed in the bylaws, and should include roll call for all votes. Executive Session, in which proceedings are kept secret, must be tightly regulated.
2. The **role of the NPC** should be to **enact the will of the membership**. To this end, we propose that the NPC publish the agenda of their regular meetings in advance, solicit suggestions and input around problems earlier in the process, hold **electronic town halls**

with members to facilitate discussion around upcoming decisions, and subordinate itself to the decisions of Conventions and referenda.

3. The NPC **Steering Committee must be democratized**. It should be an administrative body that does not make political decisions, and the positions should either rotate or be elected at Convention. Otherwise, as it currently has too much power for an unelected body, it should be abolished.
4. Vacancies in nationally-elected positions should be filled by **special election**.
5. **Expand the NPC** and add **regional representation** requirements, and require that the next new National office be located outside coastal population centers.
6. Require candidates for national DSA offices to disclose sources of income and major private property ownership, and add a **low-income category to NPC diversity requirements**.
7. A **national referendum procedure** must be created to allow for recall of nationally-elected positions such as the NPC, and to allow for meaningful direct membership participation in the political trajectory of the organization between conventions.
8. DSA **finances** must be more **transparent** to members. Members should know how their dues are spent, and how organizational labor is allocated. DSA should investigate a participatory budgeting process for some percent of the budget.

1.

To democratize speech on behalf of DSA, we should create a **National Spokes-council**, selected by and accountable to the membership, to handle press on behalf of the organization.

1. **Reform National Working Groups** by creating a formalized way of joining them that is accessible to all members, creating fixed membership criteria (e.g. membership in an email list), and ensuring that they have internally democratic decision-making structures. Create democratic mechanisms for organizing new working groups.
2. We must build and empower **regional organizations** to enable chapters to collaborate more effectively, to engage at-large members, and to facilitate the continued growth of DSA.
3. Require **greater chapter democracy**, including requirements that chapter officers are subject to recall, that chapter or branch meetings are held no less than every two months, and that self-organized caucuses are protected. Support growing chapters in their transition to branch structures to facilitate community organizing and local internal democracy.
4. DSA members should have the opportunity to **join DSA directly through their local chapter**, including filtering dues through it to national instead of the reverse. This should not affect individuals' ability to join as at-large members of DSA. When paying dues through the national website, members should have the option to allocate money to their chapter.

Other Resolutions

1. Develop an **anti-oppression education program**, and roll it out to every chapter. We must work to eliminate the replication, within the organization, of the oppressions that pervade our society. Like nearly every organization in this country, DSA has a misogyny problem, DSA has a racism problem, DSA has an ableism problem, and DSA has a problem replicating the stigma against poverty. These problems are not merely unseemly for a socialist organization, they are unjust, and they severely hamper our work. We urgently need to address these problems, starting by listening to the people experiencing them.
2. We support the development of **National Accessibility Guidelines** in solidarity with the Disability Working Group.
3. Develop a **National Organizing Manual**, drawing best practices from chapters engaged in different activities and with different local conditions. The National Organizing Manual should be an easily accessible guide covering suggested operating procedures to meet any chapter or member's needs within the organization: logistically, relationally, and operationally.
4. In addition to ensuring that all chapters have implemented Resolution 33, which created a National Grievance Policy, develop a national **conflict resolution education program**, to help our members learn to help one another process disagreements in a productive way, before they turn into grievances. Instead of avoiding conflict stemming from our political disagreements or allowing it to escalate, we must instead learn to manage it, learn from it, and in a dialectical way form syntheses from it.
5. Develop an **accountability mechanism** for DSA-endorsed electoral candidates including a set of standards candidates must adhere to in order to obtain and retain our endorsement, mechanisms for rescinding any endorsements of political candidates that betray our principles, and political education and other programs to help candidates understand our principles.
6. A **Caucus Bill of Rights** guaranteeing the right of members to self-organize into caucuses based on shared political positions, identities, and interests, with protections for their ability to advertise events in DSA communications channels and make use of non-financial chapter resources.
7. Hire a **dedicated information technology specialist** to coordinate with member-volunteers to maintain DSA's technology assets and develop new ways to improve member experience and engagement both on and offline. Because of DSA's explosive growth across a huge geographic space, participation in DSA requires an increasing amount of technical infrastructure: to keep track of members, enable democratic conversation amongst members, and help organize nationwide actions.

A Word About Priorities Resolutions

Though we all share the goal of socialism, we may not all share the same path to that goal. We believe in **building a culture and network of trust and accountability** in order to **empower our members** to embark on ambitious and sometimes untested paths. When we learn from one another and support one another as we develop independent projects, we strengthen our political education, we strengthen our creativity, and we strengthen our unity and solidarity.

National DSA should focus on creating bonds: between members, through the support of locals in their work, and between chapters, through the facilitation of cross-collaboration. By **building skill-sharing and knowledge-sharing networks**, National DSA can help to turn one local's success into a series of wins across the country.

We believe that the vast majority of opportunities for socialist victories are at the local level, and that local chapters are in the best position to understand their local geography. We believe that we need to be receptive to new ideas and adaptable to changing conditions. We believe that National DSA should be focused on **helping chapters develop the capacity** to get their own **local wins**. And we believe that the best model for democracy for deciding on national campaigns is to allow you as a member to **vote with your feet** by joining and working with democratically-run national working groups. For all these reasons, **we oppose a predetermined list of national issue campaigns** set in stone for two years.

DSA is a laboratory for socialist organizing that has been exploring a wide variety of worthwhile projects. We would like to draw attention to the following campaigns as examples of promising work we would like to see continue, spread and develop in the coming years. These examples are not an exhaustive list. There is other good work being done, and local organizers will continue to identify new campaign opportunities.

- **Housing Justice:** build and support popular neighborhood assemblies,¹ tenants unions,² housing cooperatives, eco-housing, community land trusts, and anti- gentrification coalitions;³ and hold landlords accountable.⁴⁵
- **Ecosocialism:** protect people and nature from fossil fuels,⁶ toxic waste,⁷ and ongoing climate catastrophe.⁸ Work to ensure clean air, water, and land for everyone. Prepare and repair the world with community resilience,⁹¹⁰ permaculture, and democratic, municipal control of energy grids and utilities.¹¹¹²

¹ TANC: Tenant and Neighborhood Councils, Bay Area

² Portland DSA and Holgate Manor: www.kxl.com

³ Housing and Homelessness Committee, Los Angeles DSA: www.dsa-la.org

⁴ Stomp Out Slumlords, Metro DC DSA: mdcdsa.org

⁵ No Eviction Without Representation, San Francisco DSA: dsasf.org

⁶ Cuomo: Walk The Talk On Climate!, NYC DSA: www.socialists.nyc

⁷ Protect Our Water!, DSA Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky: (pg. 3) dsacincy.org

⁸ Sunshine Solidarity, Miami DSA: miamidsa.org

⁹ Hurricane Harvey relief, Houston DSA: houstondsa.org

¹⁰ Mutual Aid Disaster Relief: mutualaiddisasterrelief.org/

¹¹ No Rate Hike, DSA Piedmont-Greensboro Branch: www.dsanc.org

¹² #NationalizeGrid, Providence DSA: www.nationalizegrid.org/

- **Anti-Racism and Indigenous Rights:** working locally and globally¹³ to dismantle systems of oppression and ensure that all people have what they need to thrive. Encouraging and supporting anti-racist and anti-fascist organizing,¹⁴ and work to end the colonial oppression of indigenous people and protect the rights of First Nations.¹⁵
- **Freedom of Movement and International Solidarity:** abolish ICE¹⁶ and ensure freedom of movement for all people. Develop international relations policy based on peace and economic solidarity, dismantle the war machine, and support global freedom struggles.¹⁷
- **Restorative and Transformative Justice:** with the goal of abolishing police and prisons, efforts to make police accountable to communities,¹⁸ support incarcerated people,¹⁹²⁰ and build community justice systems²¹ to transform bad situations and unjust conditions into nurturing and just ones.²²²³
- **Grassroots Base-building and Mutual Aid:** creating organizing spaces that are safe,²⁴ welcoming,²⁵ and inclusive,²⁶²⁷ creating innovative campaigns²⁸ focused on the needs of communities²⁹ where they live,³⁰ and giving our resources³¹ to allow communities to thrive in their own way.
- **A Commitment to Socialist Feminism:** supporting reproductive justice,³² incorporating socialist feminism into the organization through education³³ and action.³⁴
- **Democratize Finance:** decommissioning predatory financial institutions and creating alternatives like participatory budgeting, credit unions and public banks.³⁵³⁶

¹³ Democratic Socialists for Justice in Palestine: www.alternet.org

¹⁴ Form Letter for student protests, DSA Legal: twitter.com

¹⁵ #NoDAPL National Day of Action, Cleveland DSA and nationwide: dsacleveland.org

¹⁶ OccupyICE, Portland and nationwide: www.theguardian.com

¹⁷ Demanding Blazers end contract with Leupold & Stevens, Portland DSA: twitter.com

¹⁸ No Tasers for SFPD, San Francisco DSA: dsasf.org

¹⁹ Emancipation Initiative: emancipationinitiative.org

²⁰ Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee: incarceratedworkers.org

²¹ Police Civilian Review Board organizing, Harrisburg DSA: twitter.com

²² Know Your Rights Bike Clinic, DSA Rochester: www.dsa-rochester.org

²³ Sex Workers Outreach Project: www.new.swopusa.org

²⁴ Red Rabbits Marshal Team, DSA NYC and San Francisco, nationwide: www.eventbrite.com

²⁵ Socialist Coloring Hour, Silicon Valley DSA: siliconvalleydsa.org

²⁶ Accessibility Guide, DSA Boston and the DSA Disability Working Group: www.bostondsa.org

²⁷ Socialist Sprouts, Pittsburgh DSA: docs.google.com

²⁸ DSA Medics: dsamedics.org/

²⁹ CPT Public Transit Campaign, DSA Cleveland: dsacleveland.org

³⁰ Brake Lights For A Better World, New Orleans DSA and nationwide: dsaneworleans.org

³¹ Benefit Night, Spokane DSA: www.spokanepublicradio.org

³² NNAF Bowl-A-Thon: prospect.org

³³ “We Should All Be Socialist Feminists”, DSA North Texas: dsantx.org

³⁴ Iowa Socialist Feminist Convergence: www.midwestsocialist.com

³⁵ Public Bank LA, DSA LA\ www.dsa-la.org

³⁶ SF Public Bank Coalition, DSA SF dsasf.org

- **Democratize Elections:** referenda,³⁷ alternative voting systems, ballot access, publicly funded elections,³⁸ abolish gerrymandering, ending state-level preemptions against local laws.
- **Workers' Self Directed Enterprise:** Cooperative, worker-owned and -run businesses and nonprofits. Community projects such as buyer coops, platform coops, and multi-stakeholder coops.
- **Health Justice:** working with the understanding that health is fundamental to freedom and intersects with every issue we experience as humans, local campaigns to retain³⁹ and expand community healthcare services.
- **Labor Organizing:** creating workers' councils,⁴⁰ organizing new industries,⁴¹ and providing solidarity to striking workers⁴²
- **Local Wins, Local Accountability:** electoral work⁴³ that focuses on electing DSA members in local races⁴⁴ like school boards, soil and water conservation districts, county commissions, and city councils,⁴⁵⁴⁶⁴⁷⁴⁸⁴⁹⁵⁰⁵¹ winning protections and material benefits⁵² for people where they live,⁵³ and gaining policy concessions⁵⁴ from local politicians.⁵⁵ Create local forms of direct democracy including community councils and participatory budgeting.

Let's Work Together!

If this platform or any part of it resonates with you, we want your help refining these proposals and passing them at convention. **This platform is a living document**, subject to revision by LSC's internal democratic process. Each of the planks of this platform needs careful drafting and revision of a formal proposal. We will need to work in close collaboration with others outside the

³⁷ Lift the Ban campaign, Chicago DSA: www.midwestsocialist.com

³⁸ Democracy Vouchers, Seattle DSA: seattledsa.org

³⁹ Save Allen Psych campaign, NYC DSA: www.socialists.nyc

⁴⁰ Tech Workers Coalition: techworkerscoalition.org/

⁴¹ Game Workers Unite: www.gameworkersunite.org

⁴² Teacher's Strike Solidarity, DSA Labor: twitter.com

⁴³ Local electoral work, Twin Cities DSA: southsidepride.com

⁴⁴ Oregon Labor Candidate School: www.wweek.com

⁴⁵ Knoxville City Council, Knoxville DSA: www.knoxvilletn.gov

⁴⁶ City Council, Brooklyn, NYC DSA: gothamist.com

⁴⁷ South Fulton City Council, Metro Atlanta DSA: www.khalidcares.com

⁴⁸ Pleasant Hill City Council, Central Iowa DSA: cciaction.org

⁴⁹ Town Council, Buffalo DSA: projects.buffalonews.com

⁵⁰ Rock Island City Council, Quad Cities DSA: www.thenation.com

⁵¹ Billings City Council, Billings DSA: billingsgazette.com

⁵² Dubuque Municipal Internet campaign, Dubuque DSA: docs.google.com

⁵³ Paid Sick Leave campaign, Austin DSA: www.thenation.com

⁵⁴ Sacramento Renter Protection and Community Stabilization Charter Amendment, Sacramento DSA: www.housing4sacramento.org/

⁵⁵ Adding DSA principles to the Democratic Party, Denver DSA: theintercept.com

caucus to build consensus, and to ensure the proposals we bring to convention reflect that consensus. You can join the caucus by sending proof of DSA membership to lsc.dsa.lux@gmail.com, and our members would be glad to engage in discussion of this platform on the DSA Discussion Board, discussion.dsausa.org.

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