

Constitution of the Social Democrats USA



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PREAMBLE

Social Democrats USA is the 110-year old organization, variously known as the Social Democratic Party of the United States of America from 1898-1901, the Socialist Party of America from 1901-1956, Socialist Party / Social Democratic Federation from 1956-1964, Socialist Party, U.S.A. from 1964-1972, and Socialist Party, U.S.A. / Democratic Socialist Federation of the U.S.A. in 1972. Social Democrats USA is the direct successor of the Socialist Party, U.S.A., the party of Eugene V. Debs, Norman Thomas, A. Phillip Randolph, and other great socialists of the past. The Socialist Party U.S.A., at its national convention on December 30, 1972, by majority vote of the delegates, changed the name of the organization to Social Democrats, USA. The organization officially became the Social Democrats, USA with the adoption of a new constitution. Nevertheless, The Socialist Party, by that name, shall continue in association with the Social Democrats, U.S.A.

Therefore, Social Democrats USA is the identical organization, and the only historic political entity that, under the name "Socialist Party", ran Eugene V. Debs and Norman Thomas for President of the United States, elected Victor Berger and Meyer London to the U.S. House of Representatives, Daniel Hoan and Frank Zeidler as mayor of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and scores of mayors, state legislators, judges, and other local political offices holders in the period from 1912 to the mid 1920s".

ARTICLE 1 – NAME AND PURPOSE

1. The name of this organization shall be the Social Democrats USA, the successor organization of the Socialist Party, U.S.A. and the Democratic Socialist Federation of the U.S.A. The abbreviated name of the organization shall be SDUSA.
2. The purpose of the organization is to promote social democracy, economic democracy, and workers rights in the United States and throughout the world through advocacy and education.

ARTICLE 2 – ORGANIZATION

1. Chartered affiliates may do business under other names provided they explicitly identify as affiliates of SDUSA (e.g., the Social Democratic Party of Pennsylvania, the Keystone State affiliate of the Social Democrats USA).
2. All affiliates shall adhere to the Provisions of the Statement of Principles and National Constitution regardless of what name they use for business purposes.
3. No one who is not a chartered affiliate of SDUSA shall claim to be so.
4. An affiliate may consist of a single member provided he/she is willing to be the representative of SDUSA for his / her area and is willing to work to grow the organization. Each affiliate of SDUSA with 5 national members shall be designated a Local.
5. A member or members wishing to be an affiliate shall be chartered upon acceptance by the NC.
6. Nonmembers, and those who have fallen from good standing, cannot apply to be affiliates.
7. Affiliates and Locals may allow anyone to attend local meetings, at their pleasure, with the exception of those banned from membership because of ideological incompatibility. However, only members of the national organization in good standing can vote on organizational matters and serve as officers or representatives of the Local.
8. Affiliates and Locals may not combine or enter into coalitions with those defined herein as ideologically incompatible.
9. Affiliates and Locals shall be responsible for providing to the National Office (NO) a report semi annually detailing that body's local political work. Locals, regional and state organizations shall write Bylaws and send a copy to the NC. These Bylaws shall be in accordance with the national organization's Bylaws and Constitution. State Parties shall also file a constitution.

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERSHIP

1. Members shall state in their membership applications that wishing, by democratic means, to bring about democratic socialism / social democracy they wish to be enrolled in SDUSA.
 - A. Further, members shall state that they are in substantial agreement with the Statement of Principles.

B. No one who espouses "democratic centralism", "Marxism-Leninism", "vanguardism", "socialism-communism", "national socialism", nor anyone under the discipline of an organization espousing any of these dictums shall be admitted to Membership. It shall also be incompatible for a prospective member to be involved with groups that espouse violence when a peaceful and democratic path to social change exists. It shall also be considered incompatible for a prospective member to hold membership in any organization that advocates racism, sexism, or discrimination based on national origin, creed, or color. Also, no members of cult-like organizations which demand complete loyalty of followers including the use of mind control techniques, surrender of personal finances, and/or participation in criminal activity may be members of SDUSA. Further, it shall be incompatible for someone after becoming a member to join a group that bans members of SDUSA from membership.

C. No one who espouses the violent overthrow or subversion of the government of the United States of America or any of the several states or its territories while said government remains democratically constituted and elected, shall remain members of SDUSA. Nor shall anyone be a member who is also a member of any group that supports subversion or criminal activity aimed at any citizen based on race, color, creed, national origin, sex, or sexual orientation. No one who supports the interest of any other sovereign state against the interests of the United States of America, nor anyone engaged in espionage against the United States of America, shall be permitted to retain membership. This shall not be construed to ban those with dual citizenship or resident aliens who are citizens of another nation from membership.

2. Members shall pay annual dues.

A. Individual Members shall pay dues the rates of which will be determined yearly by the NC.

B. The Organization is empowered to provide at least five categories of dues for membership. These categories should include

- a. regular dues
- b. family dues
- c. student dues
- d. low income dues
- e. sustainer dues

C. A Member may fall from good standing after three months of non-payment of dues and the receipt of a request for said dues from the National Office. However the NC shall be empowered to waive that fall from good standing of an individual member for good reason.

D. A member in financial hard times may petition the NC for a dues reduction. The petition shall state, briefly, the nature of the problem and its approximate duration.

F. It should be the responsibility of all members to the degree that they are able or in which they are comfortable to support the work of SDUSA. It shall also be the responsibility of members to refrain from actions and forms of rhetoric at party functions and bodies which would tend to disrupt and hinder the work of the organization. Rules of civility and respect for others will be maintained within SDUSA.

G. No member shall be deprived of membership, office, or standing without scrupulous due process.

a. A member accused of bad behavior shall have the right to be heard at reasonable length through himself, herself or any representative he or she shall name before any body constituted to administer discipline.

b. A member shall have the right of appeal to the next highest body within the organization in all disciplinary matters.

c. It shall be the responsibility of each Member to notify the National Office of changes in contact information, including but not limited to street address, e-mail address, and phone number.

d. Members who are unknown to the body approving their membership shall provide some reasonable form of identification if their dues check does not have a permanent street address printed on it.

e. Any citizen or resident of the United States of America and its territories is eligible for membership.

f. Any full time student regardless of educational environment may be a member of the YSD and may remain so as long as they are full time students even if they hold a position within the national or local SDUSA.

g. All members over the age of 16 shall be members of SDUSA.

h. All members over 18 shall be members of the Socialist Party, USA.

ARTICLE 4 – CONVENTIONS

1. National Conventions shall be held regularly in each even-numbered year, at a location determined by the National Committee. Special Conventions may be called by a majority of the full membership of the NC or by referendum. The representation shall be as follows:

A. The number of delegates to all conventions shall be set at least sixty days before the date set by it for the convention, except in the case of a special convention when such period shall be not less than sixty days.

B. The apportionment of delegates to conventions shall be as follows: representation shall be based upon the actual membership of SDUSA, as determined by registration as of four months prior to the opening day of the convention, qualification for registration to be paid up dues and full paid up assessments by each member. A state not having registered sufficient members for a full delegate may voluntarily combine with a contiguous state or states to elect a voting delegate(s).

C. YSD representation at conventions shall be at the rate of one for each ten SDUSA delegates, such representatives to be elected by the YSD.

2. Voting for delegates shall be by secret ballot. The method of election of delegates shall be determined by the state committee in organized states. In unorganized states, delegates shall be allocated to locals and to the membership at large. Such locals shall determine the method of election of delegates. Delegates allocated to membership at large shall be elected under procedures to be set by the NC. Only members in good standing who have been members for at least six months prior to the closing of the vote shall be entitled to vote. The number of such members in each state or local shall be determined by the National Secretary and shall accompany the apportionment. No protest on the number of such members shall be entertained unless it is made before the vote is closed.

3. Delegates to national conventions shall be members of SDUSA, in the state which they represent, except as provided in 1.b of this article and shall have been members of the organization for at least six months immediately preceding the opening of the convention. For the purpose of determining whether a delegate has been a member for six months, YSD membership may be included to the extent of six of the six months needed as membership in SDUSA.

4. The election of delegates to the national convention shall, whenever possible, be completed not later than thirty days preceding the convention, and state and local secretaries shall furnish the National Secretary with lists of accredited delegates immediately upon their election.

5. The National Chair shall open the convention and shall preside until the convention is permanently organized by the uncontested delegates on roll call as prepared by the NC.

6. Conventions shall adopt the platform and the constitution of SDUSA and transact such other business as may properly come before the convention and all acts of the convention shall be final and binding on all officers, committees, and members, unless and until reversed by a referendum.

7. The NC shall issue a call for resolutions and suggestions three months before the convention. It shall prepare a preliminary agenda.

ARTICLE 5 – REFERENDA

1. The NC and the National Secretary shall submit to a referendum vote of the members:

A. Any question, motion, resolution or constitutional amendment if submitted to the NC and endorsed by at least five locals or affiliates in at least three different states, such locals or affiliates having a total membership of at least one-third of the total membership of SDUSA.

- B. Any question, motion, resolution or constitutional amendment proposed by at least two-thirds of the actual membership of the NC.
2. Proposal to submit matters to a referendum shall be printed in Hammer & Tongs and shall be open for endorsements for a period of thirty days. If there are not sufficient endorsements at the expiration of thirty days, the matter may not be raised for a period of six months. Notice of such result shall be given to all members.
 3. Whenever a national convention is to be held within six months, no question shall be submitted to a referendum vote except a motion to postpone the convention.
 4. Referenda shall be submitted without preamble; comment not to exceed five hundred words both for and against the proposition may accompany it.
 5. The return of the vote in any referendum shall be in the National Office not later than thirty days after the date of mailing of ballots by the National Office.
 6. Whenever a motion, resolution, amendment or question has been submitted to a referendum of the membership, no referendum on the same issue may be held for at least one year.
 7. Only members of SDUSA, who have been members for at least six months and who are in good standing may vote in a referendum.

ARTICLE 6 – NATIONAL COMMITTEE

1. The NC shall assume office immediately upon election, and shall hold office until its successor have been elected. Between conventions, the NC shall be the governing body of SDUSA, with authority to establish policies and direct in accordance with convention and referendum decisions.
2. The NC shall represent SDUSA, in national and international affairs. It shall call conventions, serve as a temporary credentials committee, prepare a tentative agenda and temporary rules and order of business. It shall submit a report to the membership at least thirty days before the Convention covering finances, activities, membership, and the general state of SDUSA and make recommendations to the Convention as it finds necessary. The NC shall meet by conference call and shall set its own schedule of meetings. A quorum for NC meetings shall consist of 50% plus 1. It shall send NC minutes to all state, local, and branch organizations.
3. The NC shall be the custodian of all property of SDUSA. Upon dissolution, suspension, expulsion, resignation, disaffiliation or withdrawal of any state or local organization or the YSD, all its books, money and other property shall become property of the NC. If there are the required number of locals or members who are willing to comply with the decisions of SDUSA, all such books, money and other property shall be transferred to the reorganized sections, as approved by the NC.
4. It shall fix the location of the National Office. The NC shall select the National Secretary and Youth Secretary, approve major expenditures of the NO, and shall approve its budget. The NC shall set compensation for all national staff.
5. The National Convention shall elect members of the NC. Not less than ninety days before the date of any national convention or not less than sixty days before the date of

any special convention the NC shall apportion the representation to such convention in accordance with the provisions of this constitution. Likewise, the National Convention shall elect in the same manner alternates to the NC, from members according to the number of votes they received.

6. If a member of the NC is unable to attend a meeting of the NC, he should notify the National Office, which shall then notify the alternate designated by the absentee in order of preference to sit for him at the meeting. There shall be no proxy voting during NC meetings.

7. The NC will have not more than 15 members. All named officers and the YSD Chair are members of the NC. The remaining seats are filled by representatives of Affiliates and Locals apportioned according to size and geographic distribution. Each Affiliate shall receive 1 seat. Locals shall receive 1 seat for every 5 members, 2 seats for 10 members, etc.

8. Vacancies of officers or the Chair shall be filled by the NC, with the exception of the YSD Chair. Two years continuous membership in SDUSA is required for membership on the NC.

9. The NC may select a National Advisory Council composed of SDUSA members, representative of labor, cooperative, fraternal, veterans, peace and youth organizations which shall serve as an advisory body.

ARTICLE 7 – OFFICERS and STAFF

1. The mandatory named officers of the SDUSA are National Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. The National Chair and Vice Chair are elected by the Convention. The Secretary and Treasurer are appointed by the National Committee. The Convention may choose to elect a Co-Chair(s). Officers serve without salary. Officers are ex-officio members of the NC.

2. National Chair and other officers

A. The National Chair(s) is the leader of the National Committee. They shall be elected by the Convention by majority vote. The National Chair(s) is responsible, together with the other national officers, to publicly present SDUSA policy.

B. Duties of the Vice Chair. In the absence of the Chair or in the event of his unavailability for any reason the Vice-Chair will perform the function of the Chair.

C. The Chair, Co-Chair(s) and Vice Chair shall serve without salary and shall have such powers and duties as usually appertain to those officers. The National Chair chairs all NC meetings.

3. The Offices of Secretary and Treasurer

A. The Treasurer is responsible for the financial accounts of SDUSA. He shall provide a monthly report to the NC of the organization's financial health. It is not required that the treasurer be physically located at the National Office.

B. The Treasurer shall be elected by the National Committee and serve at its pleasure. The Treasurer may be compensated with a salary fixed by the NC and shall be a member of the NC.

4. For purposes of efficiency the National Committee will be empowered to combine the functions of Treasurer and Secretary and create the office of Secretary Treasurer. The Secretary Treasurer will be appointed by the National Committee and serve at its pleasure. The Secretary Treasurer will be an officer of the NC. The National Committee will be able to define and establish any other office as it deems necessary for the effective functioning of the SDUSA.

5. Removal of Officers. The National Committee will be empowered to remove any officers by a 2/3s vote if that officer is unable to perform his or her duties for reasons of sickness, or nonperformance of duties. Prior to making such a decision such officer must be given a 60 day notification of the NC meeting date in which such a decision is to be made. Said Officer will have the right to explain in detail why he or she should continue to be a member of the National Committee.

ARTICLE 8 - The LEAGUE of INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY (LID)

1. The LID shall continue in connection with the Social Democrats USA.
2. Membership in the LID shall be available to non-SDUSA members for \$25 per year.
3. The NC and named officers of SDUSA shall hold the same position in the LID. However the NC shall be free to establish an alternative democratic leadership body for LID.
4. The primary purpose of LID shall be to support the overall health of the US labor movement and to encourage and aid the development of economic democracy within the United States.
5. The LID shall hold a convention at least once every two years, which may be held in conjunction with the SD USA convention.

ARTICLE 9 – YOUNG SOCIAL DEMOCRATS

1. The Young Social Democrats, formerly Young Peoples Socialist League, shall be supervised by the National Secretary and the SDUSA NC. The primary activity of the YSD shall socialist youth organizing and education.
2. The constitution and rules of the YSD shall be formulated by its membership under the supervision of the SDUSA NC which shall approve all matters relating to the YSD. The YSD shall elect its own officers which shall include the Chair(s) and Vice-chair(s). The YSD Chair shall be a member of the SDUSA NC.
3. The YSD shall hold periodic conventions and shall choose a National Committee and its officers. The YSD National Secretary shall be a fraternal member of the NAC of SDUSA.
4. The SDUSA NC shall designate an NC member in every location who will serve as advisor on youth matters in that area and act as a liaison between the YSD and the NC.
5. The YSD and its members shall adhere to the referendum decisions, constitution, platform and decisions of the national convention and of the NC. The YSD shall not take

any action in conflict with state or local organizations of SDUSA. In case of such conflict, the Youth Secretary may appeal the matter to the SDUSA NC for decision.

6. Wherever the YSD creates a chapter or sectional organization, the SDUSA Local shall exchange delegates on appropriate committees.

7. Membership

A. Membership in the YSD shall be limited to persons either between the ages of fourteen and thirty one or full time students. All members of the YSD who are twenty-one years of age or over shall become members of SDUSA. However the NC of the SDUSA shall be able to wave the age requirement of certain members of the YSD for reasons of organizational efficiency and necessity.

B. All members of SDUSA, who are under 31 years of age are eligible join the YSD.

C. The standards for membership in the YSD, other than those outlined above, shall be the same as those for members of SDUSA, and members of the YSD shall be governed by the same regulations and discipline as members of SDUSA.

ARTICLE 10 – THE SOCIALIST PARTY

1. The Socialist Party, by that name, shall continue in association with the Social Democrats, USA.

2. The Socialist Party shall have the following duties and functions:

A. To maintain its present relationship with the Socialist Society of the United States of America, Inc.

B. To solicit and receive money for distribution for socialist purposes in accordance with the decision of its Board.

C. To engage in scholarly work and research on the history of the Socialist and labor movements.

D. To perform any other tasks assigned to it by the National Committee of the Social Democrats, USA.

3. The Socialist Party shall be govern by a Board, the membership of which shall be the same as the membership of the National Committee of the Social Democrats, USA, and which shall hold such office in the Socialist Party only as long as they hold the same post on the National Committee of the Social Democrats, USA.

4. The Socialist Party shall not take any actions contrary to the referendum decisions, constitution, program and decisions of the National Committee and national convention of the Social Democrats, USA.