

Constitution of the Young Democratic Socialists, USA

Last Amended August 12, 2007 in Conference at New York City, New York

Article I: Name

The name of the organization shall be the Young Democratic Socialists, USA.

Article II: Relationship to DSA

YDS will establish its own organizational structure within the broad aims and principles of the DSA, and will develop its own program relevant to youth.

Article III: Membership

Membership shall consist of members of the DSA who are under 31 years of age or who are full or part time students. Members over 31 years of age may not hold elective office in the organization.

Article IV: Chapters

Section 1. Any five or more members may apply by petition for a charter as a chapter. A full membership list and designation of a formal head of chapter or contact person shall accompany the petition and shall be resubmitted at least once in every calendar year to retain chapter status. A charter identifies a chapter as an official branch of the YDS. Chapters are entitled to support from the National Office and staff of the YDS.

Section 2. Chapters are expected to develop their own program relevant to their specific locality and needs. This program should fall within the broad terms of policy and principles set out by the YDS and the YDS Annual Conference. Chapters are expected, to the best of their abilities, to participate in two coordinated actions with YDS and/or Activist Agenda projects. Points of conflict may be referred to the Coordinating Committee by any three members of the Youth Section. If after all usual means of communication have failed, two thirds of the Coordinating Committee judge the matter to be detrimental to the organization, the Chapter may be censured and/or order to cease the activity. A chapter may appeal Coordinating Committee decisions to the Annual Conference. A two-thirds majority vote of the Conference is needed to sustain the Coordinating Committee's censure or cease activity order in case of appeal.

Section 3. Chapters shall be encouraged to form on the basis of geography. However, chapters may also be based on other considerations such as college or university, high school, work place, or special focus of political activity. Such definition shall denote the primary but not exclusive jurisdiction of the chapter. A chapter may at any time redefine itself by notifying the Coordinating Committee or Annual Conference. In case of overlapping jurisdiction, the Coordinating Committee will mediate the dispute until the Annual Conference makes a final decision by majority vote.

Section 4. Chapters shall be approved by a simple majority vote of the Coordinating Committee, or Annual Conference. Chapters may be revoked by a three-quarters vote of the Annual Conference.

Section 5. Any five or more student activists may apply for a charter as a Youth Section affiliate. A full membership list and designation of a formal head of the group shall accompany the petition and be resubmitted at least once in every calendar year to retain affiliate status. All signatories of the petition must be full or part-time students under 31 years of age. An affiliate charter establishes a semi-official relationship with the DSA general organization. Affiliates are entitled to support from the national offices and staff YDS.

Section 6. Affiliates shall be encouraged among multi-issue progressive student organizations on campuses where no chartered YDS chapter currently exists. Affiliate applications shall also be accepted from progressive single-issue organizations, where appropriate. Cases where Chapters and affiliates apply for charters from the same locality shall be referred to the Coordinating Committee.

Section 7. Affiliates shall be expected to operate within the broad terms of policy and principles set by the YDS. Procedures for resolving points of conflict shall be the same as for chapters as described in Section 2 of this Article.

Section 8. The Coordinating Committee shall prepare guidelines for approving affiliates each year. These guidelines shall be reviewed each year by the Annual Conference.

Section 9. Affiliates shall be approved by a simple majority vote of the Coordinating Committee or Annual Conference.

Article V: Annual Conference

Section 1. The Conference shall be the sovereign political body of the organization unless otherwise specified in this Constitution. It shall prescribe policy, elect and delegate powers to national officers of the organizations and serve as a forum for internal education.

Section 2. The organization shall meet in Conference annually.

Section 3. Any member of the organization shall have speaking and voting rights at the Conference. These rights shall be subject to review at the Conference meeting.

Section 4. Calls to Conference and an issue agenda shall be distributed to all members of the organization by the National Officers at least sixty days before the opening of the first session. The outgoing CC shall select members of a Conference Planning Team. The Conference shall elect a Conference Steering Committee to govern and administrate the

Conference while it is in session. The Conference shall also adopt a set of rules for plenary discussion and decision-making.

Section 5. A Special Conference shall be convened by the National Officers upon their unanimous decision or petition of chapters representing a majority of the membership, or upon direct petition of one-third of the membership. Special Conference shall be convened no less than thirty and no more than ninety days after the receipt of a valid petition. Calls to Special Conferences shall be issued to all members of the organization at least 21 days before the opening of the first session. Special Conference shall be equivalent to Annual Conference for the purpose of Sections 1 and 3 of this article.

Article VI: Coordinating Committee (CC)

The Coordinating Committee (CC) shall be made up of the national officers. It shall be the sovereign political body of the organization between Annual Conferences. Quorum for the Committee shall be 50% plus one of the national officers. The Youth Organizer serves as an ex officio member of the CC.

Article VII: National Officers and Staff

Section 1. The national officers shall consist of two Co-Chairs, the Corresponding Secretary, the Activist Editor, the Coalitions Coordinator, the Feminist Issues Coordinator, National Organizing Committee Facilitator, and 6 at-large officers. They shall be elected at Annual Conference. The 6 at-large officers shall consist of at least 3 self-identified women elected separately. All shall be elected by the WARE system, unless 30% of the members present petition for the HARE system, in which case that system shall be used. At least one of the two Co-Chairs must be a woman. The Feminist Issues Coordinator must be a self-identified woman. The two Co-Chair positions shall be elected separately. The other Officers shall be elected by a majority of the valid votes cast in their respective elections. If no candidate obtains such a majority on a first ballot, the two candidates with the largest numbers of votes shall compete in a run-off election.

Section 2. The national officers shall be the spokespeople of the organization.

Section 2a. The Co-Chairs shall be the chief spokespeople and responsible for Coordinating Administration and policy, including finances. They shall be directly supervised by the national officers in implementing the program and policy. They shall represent YDS as a combined seat on the National Political Committee of the DSA. They shall report to the Annual Conference at the end of each year of tenure on the fulfillment of the Coordinating Committee of the mandate of the previous year's Annual Conference.

Section 2b. The Corresponding Secretary shall be responsible for internal communication and publications, and for liaison between chapters. Distribution of minutes from Coordinating Committee meetings or Conferences shall be under the responsibility of the Corresponding Secretary.

Section 2c. The Activist Editor shall be in charge of the final editing, production, budget and distribution of the Activist. The Activist Editor shall select a committee of no more than 12 YDS members to serve on an Editorial Board. The Editorial Board shall make decisions about the content, style and distribution of the Activist. The board shall adopt its own procedures, work-plan and working methods. The Activist Editor shall be politically responsible to the Coordinating Committee for all decisions regarding content, style and distribution of the Activist.

Section 2d. The Coalitions Coordinator shall facilitate participation between YDS and both its domestic partners and international allies, including the International Union of Socialist Youth. The Coalitions Coordinator will work with the National Office to ensure that YDS chapters and members are connected to coalition campaigns and work. The Coalitions Coordinator is also responsible to assist the National Office in communicating with coalitions partners and bodies.

Section 2e. The Feminist Issues Coordinator shall facilitate YDS discussion and activism connected to feminist topics. In the case that 10 or more members of YDS request the formation of a women's-only discussion group within YDS, the Feminist Issues Coordinator shall serve as the group's moderator and, if desired by said group, shall report concerns or questions to the Coordinating Committee.

Section 2f. The National Organizing Committee Facilitator (NOCF) shall be responsible for recruiting members of YDS at-large into the NOC and shall work with the Organizer to target communities and campuses for building YDS chapters and Organizing Committees. The NOCF will work with the NOC to develop strategies of organizing and building YDS nationally and regionally. The NOCF will be given necessary resources to aid in its work by the National Office.

Article 7, Section 2g. The Anti-Racist Issues Coordinator shall facilitate YDS discussion and activism connected to anti-racist topics and shall facilitate the development of a people-of-color caucus and online discussion group within YDS.

Section 3. The Youth Organizer shall be the chief administrative official of the organization and shall be appointed by a joint Youth Section/National DSA personnel Committee. S/he shall be directly supervised by the national officers in implementing program and policy made by the Annual Conference and take particular responsibility for chapter building and recruitment. S/he shall produce and distribute to the CC, membership, and the National Political Committee of DSA each quarter a written report on his or her progress, challenges and assessments. Should sensitive materials which might harm the organization be included in the report, the organizer may decide to make an amended version available to the membership and/or the NPC of DSA.

Section 4. The two Co-Chairs and three members of the Coordinating Committee elected by the Coordinating Committee shall serve as a Steering Committee (SC). The SC shall make decisions at times when the full CC cannot or cannot in a sufficiently timely manner. The Steering Committee shall make all issues which it considers known to the

full coordinating committee within 24 hours of consideration. All Steering Committee decisions can be overturned by two thirds decision of the full Coordinating Committee.

Section 5. There shall exist a body called the National Office Collective (NOC) that shall consist of members of the YDS to whom the National Office is easily accessible. Their sole function shall be to put their proximity to the national office of DSA to service for YDS and the CC in an administrative function. They shall in no way have any more power than other members of the CC, except in the coincidental circumstance that members of the NOC may also be named officers of YDS, in which case they shall have only the powers granted them as named officers. The particulars of the NOC's services shall be decided by the full Coordinating Committee.

Section 6. Candidates for national office shall have been members of the organization for at least one month prior to the date of the election.

Section 7. Charges of impeachment may be brought against any officer by a 60% vote of the CC. An officer is entitled to a fair trial on all charges brought against him or her. S/he should not be subject to penalties or deprived of his/her membership without a full and open hearing before an unbiased tribunal.

Section 8. If any one of the named officer positions is vacated through resignation, death or disability, or impeachment, a majority of the remaining officers may elect a replacement from among the Coordinating Committee members to serve out the term. If any at-large offices are vacated through resignation, death or disability, or impeachment, a majority of the remaining officers may elect a replacement from the whole YDS membership.

Article VIII: Amendments

Amendments to the Constitution shall be submitted to the National Office at least two months before the Annual Conference. The text of such amendments shall be distributed by the Corresponding Secretary to the chapters at least one month before Annual Conference. Annual Conference may vote by simple majority to consider amendments moved to the floor. All amendments shall require a two-thirds majority vote for passage.