



NEW MEMBER HANDBOOK

2025



WHAT IS DSA?

Welcome to DSA! We are so glad you joined.

The Democratic Socialists of America is the largest socialist org in the United States, and is a proud, member-driven mass organization. We believe that working people should run both the economy & civil society, and we show our commitment to this principle by being an organization of, by, and for the working class.



We want a democracy that creates space for us all to flourish, not just survive. One that provides basic material necessities to all with the input of all. We want to collectively own the key economic drivers that dominate our lives, such as energy production and transportation. We want the multiracial working class united in solidarity instead of divided by fear. We want to win “radical” reforms like single-payer Medicare for All, an end to militarized policing and ICE terrorism, pursue an Eco-Socialist future through robust green energy programs, organize unions for every worker, and more in order to transition to a freer, more just world. We want a democracy powered by everyday people.

The capitalist class tells us we are powerless, but TOGETHER we can take back control!

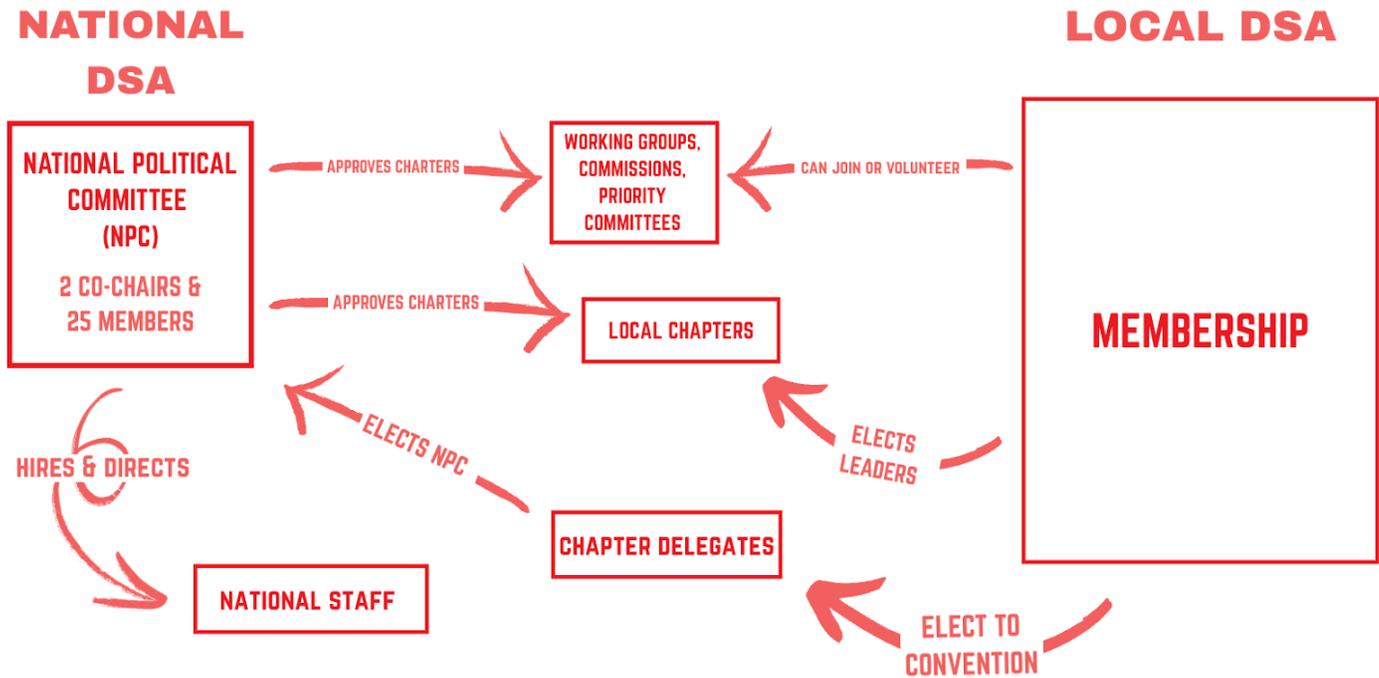
Officially founded in 1982, Democratic Socialists of America (DSA)—and its two predecessor organizations, the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) and the New American Movement (NAM)—had their origins in the early 1970s, at the beginning of a long-term rightward shift of U.S. and global politics. In the last decade, DSA has seen a huge boost in membership. You may have heard of our more prolific victories like electing congresswoman Rashida Tlaib or Zohran Mamdani’s recent win in the NYC democratic primary for mayor.



The Buffalo chapter of DSA began in 2018 and grew exponentially along with the national organization as a result of the growing popularity of ‘democratic socialism’ during the Bernie 2016 campaign.



DSA's Structure, National & Local



OUR LOCAL CHAPTER

Priority Campaigns

Our chapter selects priority campaigns to organize around, as entry points for the greater community to see and understand who we are and what we fight for. **No savior is coming to help us, so we must organize each other – in the workplace, as tenants, at the ballot box, and beyond!** Here are some of our 2025-26 priorities:

New York Health Act. Healthcare is a right, not a privilege tied to private insurers or employers who use your literal health as a bargaining chip for their greed. Right now, the New York Health Act – free, single-payer healthcare in New York – could pass in the NYS Assembly and State Senate, but our representatives in Albany (with a Democratic majority!) won't bring it to a vote. **In this campaign, we strategize and agitate against local power sources, be they insurance-backed politicians or greedy Chambers of Commerce like the Buffalo-Niagara Partnership, who are holding up single-payer care from passage in New York.**

Good Cause Eviction. Buffalo is currently the largest municipality in New York that has *not* opted into Good Cause Eviction, a statewide law that ensures bad landlords are held in check, and that tenants are protected from

predatory rent hikes, evictions without reason, and more. Our Infrastructure Committee has worked tirelessly in local and statewide coalitions to strategize and organize around the Buffalo Common Council approving Good Cause (which, again, is a state law that cities must opt into in order for tenants to be protected). **Good Cause Eviction is the first step toward fuller housing justice, and we need it in Buffalo now!**

Break the Bonds NYS. New York State is currently one of the largest investors in Israel Bonds, which are unrestricted loans that go directly to the Israeli treasury, and thus fund their war crimes and genocide against the Palestinian people. Alongside a coalition of DSA and JVP chapters upstate, we are demanding that Comptroller Tom DiNapoli **stops** his use of public retiree dollars – primarily, with funds from the New York Common Retirement Fund – for Israel Bonds. **Taxpayers, retirees, and union members shouldn't have their money sunk into junk bonds that furnish genocide.**

Workplace Organizing. In Buffalo DSA we believe in Organizing the Unorganized! Through the framework of DSA & UE's national Emergency Workplace Organizing Committee (EWOC) we help guide workers through the unionization process, from initial organizing conversations, to affiliating with an international union & bargaining a contract. **Organizing a union and a democratic workplace is not easy in the United States, and we want to set our comrades up with the best chance for success.**

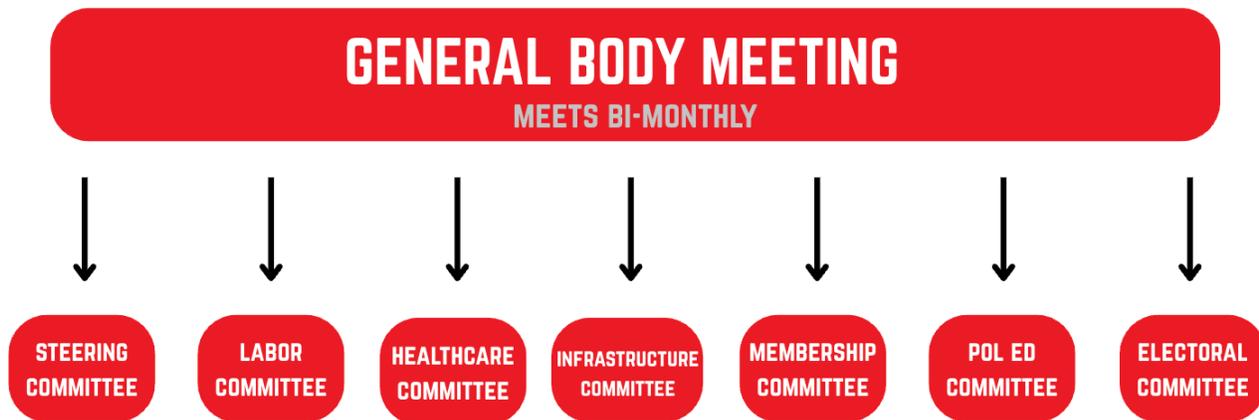
Other Projects. Our chapter democratically decides on taking on additional campaigns or projects, whether they originate in the chapter or are part of a local/regional coalition. Past projects have included, but are not limited to:

- **Blank Biden/Leave it Blank**, an electoral campaign urging Democratic primary voters to leave their NYS Democratic Primary ballots blank, to showcase discontent with the Dems and Biden's policies supporting genocide in Gaza. 10% of the entire state voted blank, which we then saw reflected in dismal Democratic Party results in November 2024 in our "safe, blue" state.
- **2023 Sidewalk Snow Removal Report**, a research and advocacy project highlighting the need for municipal sidewalk snow removal in the city of Buffalo. This is a major issue for working class and disabled Buffalonians who cannot access bus stops or other vital city services when sidewalks are poorly maintained in bad weather.
- **Protests, Strike Support, and Nonviolent Direct Action.** As socialists, there are several fights we believe in – for immigrant rights, trans rights, climate justice, and beyond – that are not necessarily represented by our current chapter priorities. While there are opportunities for members to help us establish committees and campaigns, we also stand in solidarity when called at local or regional rallies, as much as we can.



Committees & Working Groups

Most of our chapter work is done through our committees. Committees are ratified by our General Body at General Body Meetings (GBM, see below) and regularly meet to discuss campaign work and strategize. Each committee reports back to membership at a GBM, and any committee's major work or partnerships are subject to General Body approval. If you don't find your home in any of our current committees, any member can present a resolution to charter a new working group with 5 other cosigning members! (More on resolutions in a later section!)



General Body Meetings and Local Convention

General Body Meetings happen every other month. These are opportunities to hear updates from committees on their work, debate items that are brought to the general body for a vote. This includes endorsing new organizing campaigns, taking a certain political action, or allocating a large portion of our dues to a project. **Participation and discussion at General Body Meetings makes our organization stronger and reflective of what YOU want us to prioritize as an organization.**

Each year during the month of May, the chapter holds a larger GBM known as Local Convention, where we elect leadership, ratify our standing committees, and set our chapter's political platform for the year to come.

How We Run Meetings

ROBERT'S RULES

To ensure meetings are run democratically and remain comradely, we use a standard of rules called **Robert's Rules**

To:	You say:	Interrupt Speaker	Second Needed	Debatable	Amendable	Vote Needed
Adjourn	"I move that we adjourn"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Recess	"I move that we recess until..."	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Complain about noise, room temp., etc.	"Point of privilege"	Yes	No	No	No	Chair Decides
Suspend further consideration of something	"I move that we table it"	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
End debate	"I move the previous question"	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Postpone consideration of something	"I move we postpone this matter until..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion	"I move that this motion be amended by..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Introduce business (a primary motion)	"I move that..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

The above listed motions and points are listed in established order of precedence. When any one of them is pending, you may not introduce another that is listed below, but you may introduce another that is listed above it.

of Order. These rules can be tricky to understand, and you aren't expected to know them by heart! We sometimes offer Robert's Rules trainings, so look out for those in the future.

Resolutions, Bylaws Changes, and Committee Charters

Every chapter member has a right to bring forth (1) resolutions for the entire chapter to follow as priorities/agreed upon rules, (2) bylaws changes, which are foundational changes to the chapter's written processes or structures, and (3) new working groups or committees, which plan and develop campaigns or chapterwide efforts. Our Google Drive gives members access to templates for each of these types of actions, but anyone on chapter leadership is happy to help you develop one if you need further support.

(Resolution Title, e.g. "Resolution to Encourage Monthly Dues")

Author(s):

Chapter Co-Sponsors: **(requires 5 chapter members in-good-standing signed-on)**

Rationale:

(the "whereas" statement begins the rationale for a resolution, essentially the "why" this resolution is being proposed)

Whereas (...)

Whereas (...)

Be it Resolved:

(This section details the concrete actions Buffalo DSA is to take, such as "Resolved: Buffalo DSA will co-sponsor the x-campaign in June" and can have multiple 'resolves' for detail. Essentially this is the "What is to be Done" section that we vote on)

Resolved: (...)

Buffalo DSA Bylaws - Resolution Requirements Section:

Article IV, Section 2.

Resolutions operate as written main motions per Robert's Rules of Order that may be brought to a General Body Meeting for deliberation, amendment, and approval by the general membership. A resolution consists of a rationale section describing the nature of the motion followed by a resolved section that details the concrete actions to be voted upon. To bring a resolution forward to a General Body Meeting a resolution requires five co-sponsors of chapter members in good standing, and must be submitted to the Steering Committee no later than two weeks in advance of a General Body Meeting. The Steering Committee and resolution author(s) are responsible for communicating the proposed resolution to chapter membership at least 2 weeks in advance of a General Body Meeting. Any amendments to the resolution may be made via writing and sent to membership no later than 1 week ahead of a General Body Meeting. A resolution requires a simple majority vote among general membership via electronic ballot for approval – unless the resolution goes against a previous order of business, in which case a



HOW WE COMMUNICATE

- Signal Messenger: Signal is an end-to-end encrypted messaging platform
 - Every member is added to the General Signal Chat, but you can be in as many committee chats as you'd like. Talk to someone on the Steering Committee to get added.
- Google Group
 - buffalodsa@googlegroups.com is our primary email list for chapter membership discussions/announcements.
- Action Network
 - Our main network to schedule and RSVP for events - check the **Link Tree** on our instagram
- Resources
 - You can see all chapter resources for members in the Buffalo DSA Google Drive.
 - You can sign-up for our monthly newsletter on our website as well as navigate our Bylaws, Workgroups, and other resources.

What we believe in and what it means to be a Socialist

“The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Proletarians of All Countries, Unite!” - Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto

Class exploitation existed long before capitalism. It manifested as feudalism, slavery, and conquest – subjugating and torturing the masses for the acquisition of power, wealth, and status. Now, capitalism has shapeshifted to survive in modern contexts, via exploitative wages (or, in many places, unpaid prison labor or child labor), mass privatization of public goods and services, near-unlimited warmongering, and more. Under Capitalism, greed, cruelty, and extraction are rewarded and reinforced systemically - **The rich only care to get richer, and leave the working masses to rot.**

Socialism seeks to remedy these immense gaps at every level of civic and economic life. Through collective ownership of the means of production and the universal provision of essential goods and services, it seeks to reverse the course of Capitalism and the generations of greed, racism, sexism/transphobia, and more that capitalism has produced. Through identifying the material conditions of working people (*“What do we need to not just survive, but thrive?”*), and the raising of class consciousness (*“How do I inspire others to learn about our shared oppressors/bosses/enemies?”*). Socialists seek to wrestle power from a powerful ruling class, and redistribute political and economic power – at work and at home – to the masses.

Political growth is a slow journey. The working class politically develops not just through reading theory, but most importantly by action (praxis). The best way to develop as a socialist is by helping to build a better world for our comrades/neighbors.

JOIN A WORKING GROUP AND HELP BUILD THE SOCIALIST FUTURE!



Chapter Leadership Directory

Current Chapter Steering:

Co-Chairs act as public-facing representatives of the chapter, facilitate our meetings, and ensure chapter leadership has the support they need to thrive.

- 2025-26 Co-Chairs: **Maxwell B, Keelan E**

The Steering Committee Secretary takes minutes at our General Body and Steering meetings, or any larger, general special sessions we may have. They are responsible for maintaining our member lists, Google Drive, and assisting the Membership Committee on completing its tasks.

- 2025-26 Secretary: **Dan R**

The Treasurer ensures our finances are on the up-and-up. They are available for consultation on work group/committee budgets, and give regular reports on our budget, dues share, etc.

- 2025-26 Treasurer: **Steven J**

At-Large Steering Committee members represent your voice on Steering, and assist with any additional tasks delegated to them, including (but not limited to) the newsletter, email correspondence when the Secretary or Chairs cannot, answering DMs, and more.

- 2025-26 At-Large Members: **Taylor F, Alok P, Tyler B**

Grievance Policy

We pride ourselves on fostering healthy debate to make the organization stronger, as well as all being comrades and friends. However, any behavior that leaves the political realm and becomes personal, harassing, or harmful in nature can be referred confidentially to our Grievance Officers and adjudicated via the grievance policy. Our grievance policy offers guidelines in which violations of our community standards can be handled in a manner that benefits all parties (and, foremost, damaged member(s)). Grievance Officers are elected and do not hold Steering Committee positions to maintain neutrality.

- Current Grievance Officers: **Reene M, Patrick O**

