

2007 DSA Convention Priorities Motion
Moved by the DSA National Political Committee
October 13, 2007

Intro

Traditionally, the draft DSA National Convention Priorities Resolution document comprises the recommendations the national staff and the outgoing NPC make in targeting the use of DSA's necessarily limited organizational and financial resources over the next two years. The document sketches ways to strengthen DSA's contribution, locally and nationally, to building a stronger American (and thus global) left.

The document usually includes an analysis backing up why we recommend the priorities that we do. The analysis is not treated as an official part of the priorities (i.e., delegates need not accept every point in the preliminary motivation for the priorities).

Thus both pre-convention and convention discussion aimed at refining, amending, developing the Priorities Resolution should focus on the actual political and organizational priorities themselves. The NPC is recommending that the major national priority for the next two years be developing national and local political, programmatic, and educational initiatives around the DSA Economic Justice Agenda, as well as strengthening our internal organizational and fiscal capacities.

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Political Rationale for the Chosen Priorities

We meet at a time when both conventional Democratic Party centrism and Republican conservatism are exhausted both intellectually and politically. The disastrous and immoral war in Iraq has discredited the Republican Party, while those Democrats who refuse to cut off funding for the war or set a clear timetable for withdrawing all United States military forces, consultants and intelligence operatives dishonor themselves and harm not just Iraqis but the American people. The saber rattling over Iran is the latest indication that neither the Republican right nor the neoliberals among the Democrats have anything to offer except war and rumors of war.

Domestically, the Republican drive to deregulate the economy, cripple unions and redistribute wealth upward has led to rampant financial speculation that threatens not only a major recession, but also a financial crisis. In retrospect, the more fiscally responsible but similarly conservative "Rubinomics" of the Clinton administration failed to stop the growth of social inequality. The failure of center-right Democratic Party social and economic policy to strengthen the public provision for human needs (most glaringly in regard to health care), to invest in needed public infrastructure, and to enhance the power of workers by enacting labor law reform and replacing "free trade" policies with fair trade practices served only to exacerbate the downward trend in the quality of life for working Americans.

While DSA will remain an active participant at both the national and local level in the anti-war movement and in the broader movement for a truly democratic United States foreign

policy, we recognize that our greatest and most unique contribution to American politics lies in reintroducing into mainstream political dialogue not just a vision for reversing growing economic inequality, but a program for doing so. Thus, DSA has been developing, circulating and refining an economic justice program that introduces into contemporary politics the vision, values, and program of radical social democracy. That program rests on four pillars: restoring progressive taxation while making prudent yet major cuts in military expenditure to provide necessary public revenue; instituting universal social programs, including national health care, a fully funded, vibrant and (class and racially) integrated public education system and other high-quality public services; creating a powerful democratic labor movement (in part through labor-law reform) and fostering social movements capable of achieving equity in the labor market; and building global institutions that advance labor and human rights and provide for a sustainable environment.

For the next two years, DSA at the national and local level, in tandem with our campus organization, Young Democratic Socialists, will endeavor to develop relevant, specific campaigns and actions that will move our economic justice perspective into mainstream electoral and policy debate, as well as inform the work of social movements ranging from immigrant rights and labor rights about the struggle for truly universal national health care and other universal programs. As much as politics is about mobilizing and achieving concrete gains, it is also a war of ideas, and the social movements can only benefit from adopting and internalizing a democratic socialist perspective on the economy.



Operative Political and Organizational Priorities

Understanding that DSA locals and individuals have the autonomy to creatively implement the organization's national priorities as they best see fit, the major political and organizational priorities for Democratic Socialists of America will be as follows:

1. Anti-War Work

DSA, at both the national and local level, will continue to work to end the war in Iraq and resist efforts to create a wider war by escalating conflicts with Iran.

2. Bringing the Economic Agenda into Public Discussion of the 2008 Elections

Prior to the 2008 elections DSA, at the national and local level, will use the Economic Justice Agenda to inject progressive policy options and analysis into political debates and public forums surrounding candidacies for national offices, especially races for the House of Representatives, as well as through placing Op-Ed articles in newspapers and progressive magazines and ensuring that DSA speakers are available for public presentations at conferences, community meet-ups, etc.

3. Advancing the Economic Justice Agenda after the fall 2008 elections

3A. National Health Care Activism (possible speakers tour “Debunking Myths Against National Health Care)

DSA will work to advance a single payer national health care program. The National Political Committee and National Director will explore the possibility of a speakers’ tour of Canadian, United States, and other progressive health care experts aimed at dispelling “Reactionary Myths Against National Health Care.” The tour would aim to rebut disinformation about universal public health care systems that is being spread in the mass media by both conservative and centrist opponents of truly comprehensive, universal national health care.

3B. Publicizing and Working on Other Core Parts of the Economic Justice Agenda

DSA thru its activism in relevant local and national coalitions and through public socialist political education, will also engage in work to advance the other core parts of our Economic Justice Agenda:

- a fair federal tax system based on progressive taxation,
- a shifting of resources away from inefficient, redundant and unnecessary military expenditures and toward programs that meet people’s needs, and
- extending the human rights of all workers, including immigrant workers, and laws that support workers’ rights to organize.

4. Public Political Education

DSA will also support public and internal political education around:

- all of the issues in Economic Justice Agenda,
- lessons to be learned from leftist movements and governments in Latin America who are posing alternatives to global neo-liberalism, and
- environmental issues that can only be addressed by confronting corporate control of the global economy.

5. Strengthening Locals

To accomplish these aims, the DSA staff and NPC will work to support existing locals and help initiate new ones. In particular, the staff and NPC are instructed

to deepen their initiatives to work with individuals who wish to start or revitalize locals in communities where DSA has significant numbers of members, but little or no organized DSA activity.

The success of our new Atlanta local demonstrates what is possible with a few skilled organizers working closely with the national office and NPC.

6. Strengthening Young Democratic Socialists (YDS) and YDS/DSA Relations, particularly through internal political education

Through all of the above efforts, DSA will work to build upon the recent growth of Young Democratic Socialists on campuses across the country and to promote greater cooperation and mutual, productive interaction between the two key parts of our organization, particularly in regards to transitioning YDS graduates into activist roles in DSA locals.

The Convention also notes the success of the joint YDS-DSA leadership political education retreat and recommends that the staff and NPC disseminate materials from that event on the web to aid locals, campus chapters, and small groups who wish to deepen their knowledge of socialist theory and left analysis of United States and global political trends.

7. Growing Fiscal Resources to Support Organizational and Political Growth

The NPC and staff should continue to devote more attention to increasing fundraising within DSA and securing funds from supportive unions and foundations. The Convention particularly commends the recent initiative of the NPC to work to increase significantly the number of DSA members on the national financial pledge plan. The NPC and staff will work to increase the national budget, while also aiding locals in the fundraising they do to support activism, public educational programming, and public communication, such as newsletters and regular mailings.

8. Sustaining Improvement in Democratic Left and Web Communication

The Convention notes the continuing improvement in the quality of *Democratic Left* and also the increased use of Web communication, such as News from DSA and the YDS Activist updates and discussion of organizational matters on DSAMember. The NPC and staff will work with all interested DSA activists to extend and deepen our use of electronic forms of publicity and communication.