

# **SOCIALIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (SP USA)**

## **NATIONAL CONSTITUTION- 2011**

### **ARTICLE I: Name**

The article of this organization shall be the Socialist Party of the United States of America, hereinafter called "the Party."

### **ARTICLE II: Purpose**

The purpose of the Party is to establish by democratic means a new society based on democratic socialism in which democracy is extended from politics to the economy and where production of goods and services is based on human need instead of private profit, a society in which all exploitation has been abolished and where human rights will come before property rights.

### **ARTICLE III: Membership**

Section 1: Every person who is a resident or citizen of the United States, its territories, commonwealths, or possessions, who subscribes to the principles of the Party, shall be eligible for membership.

Section 2: A member in good standing is a member that has remitted dues to the Party and has signed the statement in section 3 below. Members in arrears in the membership dues for three months or more are no longer in good standing. Members not in good standing shall not be entitled to hold party office nor vote in any Party election or referenda.

Section 3: Every applicant for enrollment as a member in good standing of the Party shall sign the following membership application: "I, the undersigned, desiring to bring about by democratic means a new society based on democratic socialism, hereby apply for membership in the Socialist Party of the United States of America and subscribe to its principles."

Section 4: Applications for enrollment as a member in good standing of the Party at-large shall be acted upon by the National Secretary or National Action Committee and are subject to review by the National Committee in unorganized states, and by state committees in organized states.

### **ARTICLE IV: Organization**

Section 1: State organizations may be chartered by the National Committee upon the application of one or more locals in a state. For purposes of chartering state organizations, the District of Columbia, Guam, the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and all other lands under the jurisdiction of the United States of America shall be considered states.

Section 2: Local organizations may be chartered by the State Executive Committee, or the State Convention, upon the application of five or more members in an area. A copy of the completed charter application must be filed with the National Office. A local organization may apply to the National Committee for a charter if: (a) The next meeting of the State Executive Committee is not scheduled within three months subsequent to the filing of a copy of the completed charter application with the National Office. (b) The local organization has not received a response from the state organization within three months of filing a copy of the complete charter application with the National Office, and the local in formation has made a good faith effort to notify the state organization of its desire to charter, and provide written notice to the state organization of intent to apply with the national committee.

Section 3: Where there is no state organization, or where the state organization is non-responsive or non-functional, the National Action Committee has the authority to charter local organizations.

Section 4: State or Local organizations chartered by the National Committee or National Action Committee must submit regular reports to the National Committee as requested. a) Organizations which do not report will be subject to automatic charter revocation. b) The National Committee is empowered to draft rules on reporting.

### **ARTICLE V: Administration**

Section 1: The affairs of the Party shall be administered by the National Committee, the National Action Committee, and the Party's officers and subcommittees.

Section 2: National referenda, national conventions, and National Committee decisions and policies shall take precedence over conflicting state and local decisions. In all other respects, state and local organizations shall have full powers.

Section 3: State organizations hold their authority subject to the National Committee which grants their charters and may for cause revoke that charter after a hearing. Revocation of the state charter may be appealed to the National Committee and the national convention.

Section 4: Local organizations hold their authority subject to the State Committee or the National Action Committee, whichever grants their charter. Local charters may be revoked for cause after a hearing. Revocation of a local charter may be appealed to the State Committee, National Action Committee, and National Committee.

## **ARTICLE VI: Political Action**

Section 1: The decision to run state and local candidates under the banner of the Party shall be left to the discretion of the state and local organizations.

Section 2: In the absence of Socialist Party candidates, members as individuals may vote for, endorse, or support candidates of other political parties. Members as individuals may run for political office as candidates of other political parties only with the approval of the National Committee, and of the state or local organization, with the exception of political parties previously approved by the National Convention or the National Committee.

Section 3: State and local organizations of the Party may run candidates for political office in other political parties only with the approval of the National Committee.

Section 4: State and local organizations of the Party may endorse, support, or form joint party tickets with similar independent political parties only with the approval of the National Committee.

Section 5: State and local organization of the Party may endorse, support, or run candidates for non-partisan political office.

Section 6: State and local organizations for the Party shall not merge with any other political party or group.

## **ARTICLE VII: Finances**

Section 1: National dues policy shall be set by the National Committee. State and local organizations may set their own dues rates.

Section 2: No applicant shall be enrolled as a member in good standing of the Party without payment of the specified dues unless exemption is granted by the National Action Committee or the National Committee.

Section 3: The National Committee shall establish policies for the National Office to maintain the membership roles consistent with the provisions of Article III.

## **ARTICLE VIII: National Conventions**

Section 1: The national convention of the Socialist Party shall have final authority in all matters of principles, policies, constitution, and national platform, which are all subject to referendum.

Section 2: National conventions shall be held in every odd-numbered year, the time and place to be determined by the National Committee. Special conventions are limited to those purposes set forth in the special call.

Section 3: The National Committee shall establish policies for the National Office to maintain the membership rolls consistent with the provisions of Article III. (a) The National Committee shall determine the total number of delegates to the convention. Delegates shall be apportioned on the basis of total Party members in good standing. Delegates must have been members of the Party at least six months preceding the convention. The six months membership requirement may be waived by a majority vote of the National Committee or the national convention in cases where a local has no available candidates for delegates with six months membership in sufficient number to fill the delegate seats to which they are entitled. (b) i: All delegations to the National Convention shall have equal number of men and women, except: 1. odd-numbered delegations may have one more woman or man, and 2: single-person delegations are exempt. ii: Any delegation which fails to achieve gender parity [as defined in (b) (1) above] shall have the delegation's total number of votes reduced to the size of a balanced delegation (the equal number of men and women, plus one) by the Credentials Committee, unless the Credential Committee is persuaded that the state/local has made a good faith effort to meet the gender requirements. (c) Where there is a state organization, the state organization shall conduct delegate elections. If minorities exist, they shall be guaranteed representation by proportional representation. State organizations shall also send delegates on the basis of male/female parity. (d) Where there is no state organization, locals shall elect their delegates through the same procedure. (e) The National Action committee shall conduct delegate elections among members at large where there is no state or local organization. The National Action Committee shall attempt to ensure female/male parity among the at-large delegates. (f) The National Action Committee shall fix the amount of the registration fee.

Section 4: The national convention shall elect the National Chair or Co-Chair of the Party. (a) Vacancies in the office of National Chair shall be filled by the National Committee. (b) The term of office for the National Chair shall be for the interval between regular conventions.

Section 5: The national convention shall elect two National Vice-Chairs of the Party.

Section 6: The national convention shall nominate candidates for President and Vice-President of the United States at the conventions in the odd-numbered years immediately preceding the election years a) after the national platform has been adopted, b) unless any such convention decides by a roll call vote of a majority of delegates present not to nominate for those offices, and c) according to a roll-call vote of a simple majority of those delegates voting, through a process of roll-call run-off voting that eliminates the candidate with the lowest vote, in each run off, until a simple majority has chosen the nominee (b) Nominations shall be made after the adoption of the national platform.

Section 7: The national convention or the National Committee shall determine the site of the National Office.

## **ARTICLE IX: National Committee**

Section 1: The National Committee shall be the governing body of the Party, with authority to set policies and direct actions in accordance with national convention discussions.

Section 2: The National Committee shall consist of all National Committee members, the National Chair or Co-Chairs, and the National Vice-Chairs. Members of the National Committee must have been members of the Party or its merged affiliates at least one year preceding the convention. Female/male parity shall be required on the National Committee.

Section 3: The term of office for National Committee members shall be the interval between regular conventions. (a) Vacancies in the National Committee shall be filled by the alternate receiving the highest vote in the previous convention. (b) In the event a member is unable to attend a meeting of the National Committee, that member may designate and alternative to take said seat for that meeting. (c) If a member of the National Committee fails to designate an alternate, an alternate shall be seated by the National Committee in the order of the election of alternates.

Section 4: National Committee meetings shall be called at least once every six months except by two-third consent of all National Committee members. (a) Special meetings of the National Committee may be called by a majority mail vote of the total membership of the National Committee. (b) A quorum of any National Committee meeting shall be at least half of all National Committee members. (c) The National Committee may take action by mail vote. A motion put to a mail vote of the National Committee is considered passed if approved by a majority of the total membership of the National Committee. (d) A motion put for mail vote must be sent to National Committee members within three weeks after the receipt by the National Office. The deadline for return of the ballots to the National Office shall be three weeks after they are mailed from the National Office. If statements pro and con are submitted with the ballots, approximately equal space shall be both sides.

Section 5: The National Committee shall be elected by the national convention at which time the number of members of the National Committee shall be determined. Each nominee for National Committee member or alternate shall appear before the convention and make a statement on his/her goals for the National Party in the next term.

Section 6: The National Committee shall elect the National Secretary, National Treasurer, Editor, and any other officers that is deems advisable. (a) The National Committee shall fix the salaries of the National Secretary and any other officers. (b) The National Secretary, National Treasurer, and any other officers and any other offices may be removed from their offices at any time by majority vote of those National Committee members voting. (c) The National Secretary, National Treasurer, and any other officers shall be under the supervision and authority of the National Action Committee and the National Committee. (d) The National Secretary shall supervise the activities of the national organization. This office shall consult, work with, and be under the supervision of the National Action Committee and the National Committee on all Party matters, such as principles, policies, activities, and problems within the National Office and the national organization.

Section 7: Recall. Any National Committee Member(s) may be from the office by a Referendum, as provided in Article XI.

#### **ARTICLE X: National Action Committee**

Section 1: The National Committee shall establish a National Action Committee that shall be responsible for the carrying on of Socialist Party business affairs and the application of Party decisions between the meetings of the National Committee.

Section 2: The National Action Committee shall be composed of the National Secretary, National Treasurer, Editor and such other members as the National Committee shall designate who are willing and able to attend regular meetings, at least bimonthly, in a location in or near the site of the National Office. (a) The National Action Committee shall meet on call of the National Secretary, or by a majority of its members at such times as it may designate. (b) A quorum for any meeting shall consist of a majority of the National Action Committee, provided that at least one National Officer or National Committee member is present. (c) All actions and decisions by the National Action Committee shall be subject to mail vote of the entire National Committee, upon the request of five National Committee members.

#### **ARTICLE XI: Referenda**

Section 1: The National Committee and the National Secretary shall submit to a referendum vote of the members: (a) any matter acted upon by a national convention when requested to do so be any petition signed by at least 25% of the total delegates seated at the convention. Such petitions shall be submitted to the National Committee within three days after the convention adjourns. If such a petition is to submit a convention action to a referendum, the signers may submit an alternative proposition for a vote if such alternative proposition was offered at the convention. (b) Any question, motion, resolution, or constitutional amendment if submitted to the National Committee and endorsed by at least three locals in at least three states or by three state organizations having a total membership of at least 20% of the National Committee members. (c) Any question, motion, resolution, or constitutional amendment proposed by at least one-third of the National Committee members.

Section 2: Referendum proposals shall be circulated to the members and shall be open for endorsement for thirty days. If there are not sufficient endorsements after thirty days, the matter may not be raised for another six months. Members shall be notified of such results.

Section 3: If a national convention is to be held within six months, no questions may be submitted to a referendum except a vote to postpone the convention.

Section 4: For the purposes of this article, the term "membership" shall mean total members in good standing as

herein provided.

Section 5: Referenda shall be submitted without preamble. Comment not to exceed three hundred words both for and against the proposition may accompany it. The National Office staff shall make great effort to obtain pro and con statements to accompany every referendum ballot.

Section 6: Vote returns in any referendum shall be in the National Office no later than twenty-one days after the mailing date of the ballots.

Section 7: Only Party members who have been members in good standing at the time of the call for at least three months may vote in the referendum. Section 8: For a referendum vote to be approved, it must receive either 1) a majority vote of the total national membership in good standing, or 2) a two-thirds vote of those members returning ballots, provided 30% of the membership returns ballots. Section 9: Whenever a matter has been submitted to referendum, no referendum on the same issue shall be held for at least one year.

#### **ARTICLE XII: State Organization**

State organizations shall consist of one or more locals, the state committee, and officials as determined by state conventions. Section 1: State organizations may use a different party name, providing the motion to change the state party name is approved by the state convention by a two-thirds vote of those delegates present and voting.

#### **ARTICLE XIII: State Conventions**

The method and timing in the calling of state conventions shall be determined by the state organizations themselves.

#### **ARTICLE XIV: Local Organizations**

Section 1: Local organizations shall consist of all members residing in the area designated in its charter.

Section 2: Applications for membership shall be acted upon by the local executive committee, subject to review by the local organization. Local organizations shall have full power over the admission, transfers, and expulsion of members, subject to appeal to the state committee, National Action Committee, and the National Committee.

Section 3: Applicants for membership and transfers may join whichever local organization is most suitable for their place of residence and activities, subject to the jurisdiction of the local organizations concerned.

Section 4: Local organizations shall keep membership and finance records and may hold public meetings, forums, classes, and other functions. (a) Local organizations shall represent the national organization and the state organization in the area assigned for their jurisdiction. (b) Local organizations may run candidates for public office, representing the area in their jurisdiction.

Section 5: Local organizations shall elect an executive committee and it shall consist of the local chair, the local secretary, local treasurer, and any other elected officers. (a) The term of office for local officers shall be determined by the local. (b) The local executive committee shall be responsible for carrying on the Party's business affairs between membership meetings of the local organization.

#### **ARTICLE XV: Youth Affiliate**

Section 1: The Young Peoples Socialist League of the United States of America (hereinafter called "YPSL") shall be the Party's youth affiliate.

Section 2: The YSPL shall be an independently constituted affiliate of the Party and shall be subject to the Party's regulation and policies.

#### **ARTICLE XVI: Miscellaneous Regulations**

States and locals may be organized to coordinate the work of the Party, to perform any duty or function required by state, county, or local election laws.

#### **ARTICLE XVII: Amendments**

This constitution may be amended by national conventions by a two-thirds vote of those delegates present and voting, or by a majority vote of the votes cast in referendum as provided herein. Amendments passed during a National Convention go into effect at the adjournment of the Convention.

Revised at the October 2011 National Convention