

# The Organizer

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY USA NATIONAL OFFICE

NOVEMBER 2013

## Statement from SPUSA Co-Chairs After a Successful National Convention



By Stephanie Cholensky and Mimi Soltysik

As the newly elected Chairs of the Socialist Party USA, we are thrilled to report that the National Convention in New York City was a success in both productivity and spirit. The Convention passed a Plan of Action strategy, heavily focused on enhancing intra-Party

communication and offering support to our electoral candidates, which will help guide the incoming National Committee throughout the next two years. Also outlined in the strategy was a series of issue campaigns culled from Party membership. The National Committee will work with locals over the next two years to help strategy become action. Realizing that the strength of the Socialist Party USA lies with the local level, every effort will be made to provide critical organizing support.

New measures were approved to ensure accountability among National Committee members, key revisions of the Party's Platform were passed, and Constitutional amendments were debated, fiercely at times, and put to vote. A full-time Treasurer, who will work hand-in-hand with the National Office to implement a plan focused on fiscal health, was elected, and the Editorial Board of The Socialist was supplemented with new membership.

We can't discuss the Convention without mentioning the sense of camaraderie and cooperation displayed by delegates and observers throughout the country. It appears that a new sense of community is being established within the Socialist Party USA, a community where care and friendship are carrying the day. Throughout the weekend, many attendees expressed how pleased they were with the level of consideration and respect offered by membership. A working environment was created that, while keenly focused on progress was more familial than adversarial. The vibe was undeniable.

If the National Convention is an indication, the Socialist Party USA is positioned to take bold steps forward in the fight for democratic socialism. Please join us in giving thanks to those who made the Convention a smashing success, from those who raised funds enabling members-in-need the ability to attend, to the New York and New Jersey organizers who provided comfortable and easily-accessible facilities throughout the event, to those whose infectious warmth kept our membership warm on this chilly Long Island City weekend.

## SPUSA CONVENTION REPORT

By Greg Pason, National Secretary

The Socialist Party held a successful National Convention from October 25-27 in Long Island City NYC, electing new leadership, updating our platform, making some changes to the Party constitution and passing resolutions to help increase accountability on all levels of the Party.

The three day convention was incredibly positive, with delegates from across the country.

### New Leadership

#### Co-Chairs

Stephanie Cholensky and Mimi Soltysik

#### Vice-Chairs

Lynn Lomibao and John Strinka

#### National Committee

Stephanie Gussin \* Alice Kelsey \* Jen Mc Clellan \* Veronica Nowakowski \* Brooke Shannon \* Greg Pason \* Pat Noble \* Paul Garner \* Steve Katz \* Matt Erard

#### Alternates

Justin Simons \* Brandon Collins \* Maynor Moreno

**National Secretary** - Greg Pason

**National Treasurer** - Pat Noble

**Archivist** - Steve Rossignol

**Campaign Clearinghouse Coordinator** - Matt Erard

### The Party also passed several resolutions including:

- 1- increasing requirements and accountability of National Committee members.
- 2- restricting Party officers from being officers in other political parties.
- 3- setting clear rules for maintaining local/state charters.
- 4- supporting the Statement of Agreement with suggestions on new language in two sections.
- 5 re-evaluating the dues structure to increase revenue

We passed a Plan of Action and Priorities Document. The document was written by Local and State representatives after months of discussion between Local and State representatives and passed without objection.

*continued on next page*

The Organizer is the newsletter of the Socialist Party USA National Office. Subscriptions are free to members and sustainers. For bulk copies contact the SPUSA National Office at 339 Lafayette St. #303 New York, NY 10012. The Editor is Greg Pason, National Secretary.

**Convention continued...**

**Constitutional Amendments included:**

- 1- Amending the application statement (**Art. III Sec.3**) to read I, the undersigned, recognizing the necessity of the working class organizing itself independently of and in opposition to the capitalist parties and the system they defend, and creating a radically new society based on democratic socialism: collective ownership and democratic control of the means of production, distribution and commerce, through political mobilization and mass action, hereby apply for membership in the Socialist Party USA and subscribe to its Statement of Principles.
- 1- Amended **Art. II Sec.** to re-enforce and clarify those only members in good standing of the SPUSA can vote at any level of the Party.
- 2- Amended **Art. XV** to eliminate the Young Peoples Socialist League as the only possible youth affiliate and allowed by removing the specific name from that section and replacing it with "a youth affiliate".

**Platform changes included:**

- 1- amending the Legal Justice section adding sections opposing mass incarceration and supporting the rights of prisons.
- 2- amending the International section opposing the use of drones for military and police work
- 3- amending the Education section to call for forgiveness of student debt.

**Convention Awards:**

**Irv Koth Youth Awards**

Jen Mc Clellan and Pat Noble

**Ann Rosenhaft Local Organizing**

Lynn Lomibao and Paul Garner

**Jimmy Higgins**

John Strinka

**Jenny Higgins**

Marjorie Steakley

The full list of resolutions and other changes can be found at:  
<http://socialistparty-usa.net/2013-national-convention.html>

**NEXT NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING**

January 18-19, 2014 – Oakland, CA

**The Organizer**

c/o Socialist Party USA  
339 Lafayette St. #303  
New York, NY 10012

**Socialist Party USA Points of Agreement**

*The following points represent the key ideas of agreement of the Socialist Party USA.*

- 1) The Socialist Party is a democratic socialist organization. We see socialism as a new social and economic order in which workers and consumers control production and community residents control their neighborhoods, homes and school and the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not the private profit of a few..
- 2) We see the working class as in a key and central position to fight back against the ruling class and its power. The working class is the major force worldwide that can lead the way to a socialist future – to a real radical democracy from below.
- 3) We stand in opposition to all forms of oppression including but not limited to racism, sexism and homophobia.
- 4) We are a "multi-tendency" organization. We orient ourselves around our principles and develop a common program, but our members have various underlying philosophies and views of the world. Therefore we reject vanguardism and democratic centralism.
- 5) We advocate for independent political action outside the Democratic and Republican parties.
- 6) Our tactics in the struggle for radical democratic change reflects our ultimate goal of a society founded on principles of egalitarian, non-exploitative and non-violent relations among all people and between all peoples.

**SPUSA ANNUAL DUES RATES**

**Based on Net Income**

(under \$20k) base rate: \$33.00 or sliding scale up to \$78.00  
(\$20k-\$35k) base rate: \$78.00 or sliding scale up to \$153.00  
(\$35k-\$50k) base rate: \$153.00 or sliding scale up to \$275.00  
(\$50k-\$65k) base rate: \$275 plus 1% of net income between \$50,000 - \$65,000/ yr  
(over \$65k) base rate: \$425 plus 2% of net income over \$65k

*Make checks or money orders payable to "Socialist Party USA"*

[www.socialistparty-usa.net/join-us-or-renew.html](http://www.socialistparty-usa.net/join-us-or-renew.html)  
Socialist Party USA 339 Lafayette St. #303 NY, NY 10012

# 2013 -2015 Socialist Party USA

## Plan of Action and Priorities

Throughout its history, the Socialist Party USA, along with its predecessor, the Socialist Party of America, has maintained a strong and active presence in the fight for democratic socialism. From the historic campaigns of Eugene V. Debs, Norman Thomas and David McReynolds to its continued presence in the anti-war movement, the Socialist Party USA has stood as a reliable ally of the U.S. working class. Despite our impressive history, we are not content to allow past victories to define our place in the U.S. socio-political landscape. The challenges we currently face, challenges that carry the direst of consequences, demand urgent action.

The recent increase in highly-energized and spontaneous activity among our members around the country indicates that we are prepared to meet the challenges we will face over the next two years. Doing so will require a strategy, focus, and intensified level of activism, along with a revitalized level of commitment to the facilitation of Party-wide communication. Upon surveying our membership in an effort to prioritize the Party's plan of action, the following areas of concentration were determined to be of highest strategic importance, and the incoming National Committee shall direct their strategic planning accordingly.

### **Democratic Socialist Educational Dialogue**

An informed and educated Party membership is a core asset in the fight for democratic socialism, and a focus on an education that enables Party membership the ability to promote the unique political ideology of a revolutionary democratic socialism is needed. Socialism is a contested concept with many versions and visions, and the Socialist Party USA has a very unique ideology within that context. The National Committee will construct and facilitate the implementation of an educational process appropriate for all levels of political development that Party locals and individual members can access and utilize as they choose. The National Committee will also work in tandem with existing locals and developing locals to create an inter-Party culture that is prepared to engage the public with a sound knowledge of the Party's Statement of Principles and Platform. Such an effort may include new educational literature, orientation programs, online and in-person workshops and classes, education-focused field trips, and expanded membership recruitment efforts.

### **Electoral Objectives**

We are, in distinct contrast to other Socialist groups, a political party. While it is true that direct actions and education in general is fundamental to our purpose, the fact that we are a political party obligates us to run candidates for public office. Furthermore, by coordinating campaigns, we can more effectively utilize the skills of our members and develop a more coherent public stance, which can reap benefits as we continue to take part in elections.

Therefore, the party commits to running candidates for public office. We set participation in 10 elections in 5 states in 2014 as our goal. Specific members of the NC will be given responsibility to facilitate the process in close conjunction with the locals of the individual candidates. By coordinating with locals, the NC can provide substantial assistance to local campaigns, beginning with candidate recruitment through the specific functions of the campaign. By coordinating the efforts of politically experienced and other skilled members with local campaigns, the NC will provide essential functional support for the party's local electoral campaigns. This will provide an element of support and unity frequently missing in the past.

Experience shows waiting until October the year before a presidential election does not provide adequate support or organization. The NC will be charged with developing a continuous process to recruit/develop suitable candidates to represent the party in these elections. A key part of this process will be to clearly present the views and experience of potential candidates to the membership well before the nominating convention, so that the delegates will have adequate information to make an informed and wise decision.

### **Communication**

Unlike many progressive groups, we are a membership organization. In addition to accepting financial contributions (including dues) from our members, it is the members themselves who must DO the actual work of the party. Our experience shows the difficulty of doing this without the guidance and help of the party as a national entity. In many areas of our vast nation, citizens are misinformed about Socialism, and we lack the critical mass in many areas to correct these misconceptions with local resources alone. Therefore, it will benefit us to improve our internal communication with an emphasis on cooperation and coordination. This will not only be useful in local organizing efforts, but should also foster the genuine sense of unity and camaraderie that all party members deserve and have the right to expect from their party. As a priority, the National Committee, in close coordination with Party membership, shall evaluate currently existing channels of intra-Party communication, pinpoint deficiencies, and develop strategies designed to radically tighten the communication loop.

Part of this effort will include fostering horizontal relationships between locals experiencing organizing success and locals or individuals working to organize locals so that strategies can be shared quickly, support can be provided, and encouragement is readily available. We will also develop an "adopt an at-large member program" where National Committee officers and members will reach out and support at-large members. While we understand that geography can impose unique challenges to organizational efforts, we believe that much is to be gained by developing channels of support and skill-sharing between existing and developing locals. As we work toward "Democratic Revolution from Below," strengthening our local activity is of the utmost importance. Communication plays a vital role in this process.

### **Issue Campaigns**

The results of a survey of Party membership determined that the following four issues stand among top Socialist Party USA priorities.

- Eco-socialism/Environmental Justice
- Anti-War action
- Prison Industrial Complex
- Labor/Living Wage

Throughout the course of its two-year term, the National Committee shall facilitate and support the construction of specific campaigns for Party membership that focuses on these four issues. Working in tandem with Party locals and membership, the National Committee can play a vital role in ensuring our membership has the critical resources needed to establish and maintain an active and solid presence throughout the country as the eco-socialist, anti-war, prison industrial complex, and labor/living wage movements develop.

*passed by the 2013 Socialist Party USA National Convention*