

Bylaws of the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism

adopted, 9th convention, via Zoom, 8/23/2020

PREAMBLE

The Committees of Correspondence (CofC) is an organization of women and men of all ages who seek a society based on community, human equality, economic and social rights, and respect for the natural environment. We believe that a society of social justice is inseparable from a world in which relations between peoples are governed by the principles of peace and disarmament, economic development and the equality and sovereignty of nations, and striving to live in harmony with nature. We believe that to achieve such a society and world requires a joint struggle to democratically transform our present society, to end the existing vast inequalities of wealth, power and conditions. We welcome and join with all people involved in day-to-day efforts to enhance the quality of life. We view socialism as the struggle for democracy carried to its logical conclusion. We commit ourselves to an open dialogue with others about the way forward and to joint action on all shared goals. Toward these ends, we establish an organization based on openness, effective rule by membership, pluralism of opinion, mutual respect and support, and solidarity in the struggle for justice.

ARTICLE I. ASSOCIATION

CCDS is an unincorporated association whose purposes are set forth in its Statement of Principles adopted by convention. These bylaws govern CCDS and its organizations. Organizations of CCDS may adopt local bylaws, provided they do not conflict with the bylaws of the national organization. Such ancillary organizations bylaws shall be forwarded to the national office within 30 days after adoption.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Democracy and Inclusion:

CCDS is based on the democratic principle that the will of the members determines the organization's policies, program, leadership and activities. It fosters the fullest discussion among the members and provides means by which the members may effectively govern their organization. Membership is both national and local, and entitles each member to equal rights in all activities of the organization.

Section 2. Eligibility:

Membership is open to women and men of all ages without regard to class, race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical ability, or geographic area. Individuals may become members of CCDS by completing a national membership application form and submitting it, along with the first payment of dues, to the national organization.

Section 3. Dues and Sustaining Memberships:

A. CCDS shall have a regular three level, yearly dues structure: an individual rate, a low income rate, and a household of two or more persons rate.

B. Alternatively, a sustaining membership may be established. Recognizing that dues will only partially fund the organization, CCDS encourages every member to make a voluntary commitment to assist the organization, in the form of a regular sustaining-membership contribution. Sustaining memberships may be established if a member pledges to pay a monthly or quarterly rate of their choosing, as long as the total value pledged for each year is more than a regular dues rate.

Section 4. Renewal:

Renewal of non-sustaining memberships falls due each year on the first day of the month following the month in which the member joined. Sustaining memberships shall be considered in good standing as long as the pledge is paid up to date. Sustaining members may request at any time that their membership become a regular, low income, or household membership. Their normal annual dues would then be due on the first of the month following the period for which they last paid a sustainer. Members shall be given timely notice of the need to renew.

Section 5. Rights:

All members have equal rights, including the right to be informed about, discuss and participate in deciding important questions before the organization, to attend all regular and special meetings, to vote and stand for office, to offer proposals, to receive membership publications and materials, and to participate in referenda and surveys. Members are entitled to regular membership and financial reports. Subscription to the organizational newsletter of CCDS is included with membership.

ARTICLE III. ANCILLARY ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1. Definition:

A. CCDS considers active ancillary organizations to be essential to the rights of members and to the implementation of its program.

B. Ancillaries may represent regional, state, local, city, neighborhood, electoral district, workplace, industrial, occupational, campus, common field of political or ideological interest, or other designations approved by the National Coordinating Committee (NCC, see Article VI). CCDS seeks to form ancillary organizations in all these areas.

Section 2. Chartering:

A. An organization seeking to become an ancillary of CCDS must apply to the NCC for a charter. Such application shall include any relevant rules of operation and decisions on activities of the

ancillary. Upon receipt of application and approval of supporting documentation, a charter shall be granted by the NCC in a timely manner.

B. Any ancillary organization of CCDS may establish its rules of operation, structures, decide on its activities and elect its own leadership, all within the framework of CCDS' bylaws and Statement of Principles.

Section 3. Coordination:

Ancillary organizations of CCDS are encouraged to communicate ideas and to coordinate their activities. Regional meetings may be held to facilitate communication and cooperation between ancillary organizations and the NCC.

ARTICLE IV. CONVENTIONS

Section 1. Triennial Convention:

A. Convention decisions shall set the policies and guide the activities of CCDS during the period between conventions. There shall be a national, triennial (every three years), delegated convention of CCDS.

B. Convention decisions shall set the policies and guide the activities of CCDS during the period between conventions.

C. The date, time, place, purposes and rules for electing delegates to the convention shall be set by the NCC (see Article VI). A convention call, including all aforementioned information, shall be distributed to each CCDS member no less than four months prior to the convention date. During a period of preparation of at least four months prior to the date of the convention, materials presenting issues to come before the convention shall be distributed to all CCDS members for their consideration.

D. The convention shall:

- (i) Hear reports from the NCC and from all existing standing committees, working groups and task forces.
- (ii) Elect national co-chairs (see Article V) and at-large members of the NCC.
- (iii) Attend to other business.

E. The convention may:

- (i) Amend the CCDS Statement of Principles document, bylaws and or policy documents.
- (ii) Establish any national task forces needed to focus on issues important to CCDS.

F. All members in good standing may attend and stand for election to leadership positions at the convention, whether they are delegates or not.

Section 2. Special Conventions:

A. Special conventions may be called at any time by majority vote of the NCC. The NCC shall call a special convention whenever it receives a written request from one-third (1/3) of the members which states the purpose of the convention.

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Section 3. Quorum:

A majority of the registered delegates to a convention shall constitute a quorum. All questions, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws or by convention rules, shall be decided by majority vote. In the absence of a quorum, the convention may be adjourned until a specified time without notice to any absent delegate.

Section 4. Alternates and Proxies:

In the absence of a registered delegate, a registered alternate may serve. Proxy voting shall not be permitted.

ARTICLE V. NATIONAL CO-CHAIRS

Section 1. Nomination:

A name may be placed in nomination by the endorsement of at least five members in good standing.

Section 2. Election:

A. Each triennial convention shall elect no more than five National Co-Chairs, whose terms shall last until the next convention.

B. Members at a triennial convention are urged to elect at least two co-chairs who are people of color, and at least two who are women.

C. National Co-Chairs are subject to recall by mail or online balloting of the CCDS members.

Section 3. Responsibilities:

The National Co-Chairs shall publicly represent CCDS, develop its relations with other organizations and its presence in coalitions, participate in formulating policy and work to build and expand CCDS.

Section 4. Co-Chair Ex-Officio Memberships::

National Co-Chairs shall be voting members of the NCC (see Article VI) and of the National Executive Committee (NEC, see Article VII).

ARTICLE VI. NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (NCC)

Section 1. Authority and purpose:

A. A democratically elected and accountable leadership is crucial to ensure that the will of the members is clearly formulated and translated into action. Between conventions, the NCC shall be the highest governing committee of CCDS. CCDS seeks a leadership which is representative of the population of our country and of the CCDS members in every sense defined in the Eligibility section (see Article II, Section 2), and which embraces people with varied political views and organizational experiences.

B. The method of functioning of the NCC shall encourage the fullest possible inclusion of the members of CCDS in the affairs of their organization. All policy statements and position papers adopted shall be circulated to the members of CCDS. Minutes of all meetings shall be available to all members. A timely summary of meetings shall be published in the organizational newsletter of CCDS. Both majority and substantial minority positions on issues shall be presented

C. The NCC shall initiate the development of positions on urgent national and international issues. It shall, as a body and through the efforts of its members, organize all possible involvement in struggle around these questions.

D. The NCC is responsible for ensuring the finances of the national organization.

E. The NCC shall, in a timely and regular fashion, issue publications and other materials.

F. The NCC shall establish those national working groups and standing committees of CCDS needed to aid in the functioning of CCDS. The NCC may also elect Regional Coordinators for the purpose of organizing and working with ancillary organizations.

G. The NCC shall establish national task forces of CCDS. Such task forces may be necessary to carry out the principles and policies of CCDS.

H. The NCC may fill staff positions as finances permit. Such staff positions need not be filled by members of the elected leadership, but must be filled by persons who are members of CCDS.

Section 2. Nomination:

A name may be placed in nomination for membership on the NCC by the endorsement of at least five members in good standing. A member who holds a paid staff position with CCDS, other than the National Coordinator and/or National Organizer, cannot become a member of the NCC. However, a staff person may be an ex officio, non-voting member of the NCC.

Section 3. Election and Membership:

A. The triennial convention shall elect fifteen at-large voting members of the NCC. Following the convention, fifteen additional at-large voting members shall be elected by mail or online balloting of the CCDS members. CCDS members, at convention and in the subsequent mail or online balloting, are urged to elect national minorities and women to NCC membership. At-large members of the NCC are subject to recall by mail or online balloting of the CCDS.

B. Each ancillary organization is entitled to one voting representative on the NCC. Such representatives shall be elected by the CCDS members of the ancillary organization following the national triennial convention. Such representative members are subject to recall by majority vote of the ancillary organization.

C. Each permanent national task force established either by convention or by the NCC, is entitled to one voting representative on the NCC. Such representatives shall be elected by the CCDS members of the task force. Such representative members are subject to recall by majority vote of the CCDS members of the task force.

D. Between conventions and by two-thirds (2/3) vote, the NCC may add up to ten at-large voting members, to ensure the appropriate composition (as defined by Article II, Section 2. Eligibility) and the appropriate political inclusiveness of the NCC. The NCC shall seek to increase its youth membership (30 years of age or younger) to constitute at least fifteen percent of the total NCC members.

E. The NCC may additionally increase its number of voting members only if authorized by a referendum of the members of CCDS.

Section 4. Responsibilities of Members:

A. The members of the NCC shall facilitate discussion and debate among the members of CCDS, reach out to and interact with other democratic, progressive and left forces, and engage in discussions with them about matters of mutual concern.

B. NCC members may travel to represent CCDS.

C. Members of the NCC shall strive to attend all meetings of the NCC, or when this is not possible, to excuse themselves in advance. The NCC may initiate recall proceedings against non-functioning members of the NCC in accordance with the recall provisions for at-large members (see Section 3, subsection a), or for ancillary representative members (see Section 3, subsection b), or for task force representative members (see Section 3, subsection c).

ARTICLE VII. NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC)

Section 1. Purpose:

A. There shall be a National Executive Committee (NEC) of the NCC (see Article VI). The NEC is a working leadership body, able to meet frequently and regularly.

B. The NEC shall be politically representative of the full NCC and politically subordinate to it. It shall discuss and make recommendations to the NCC regarding political and organizational questions and initiatives. One-third of the members of the NEC may compel a discussion of an item within the NCC.

C. Between meetings of the full NCC, the NEC may, by two-thirds (2/3) vote, make decisions and issue statements on behalf of CCDS, within the framework of the decisions of the convention and the NCC. Whenever possible, the NCC shall be polled on policy questions.

D. The NEC shall ensure the effective functioning of task forces, working groups and committees.

E. The NEC shall provide oversight of the members' list serve and CCDS website. The NEC shall have the ability to propose removal of list serve participants that are found to be disruptive to the communicative process of the members' list serve, subject to the approval of the NCC.

F. The NEC shall exercise its financial responsibility and authority within guidelines established by the NCC.

Section 2. Election and Membership:

A. National Co-Chairs shall be members of the NEC.

B. At its first full meeting, the NCC shall select a National Treasurer, who shall be a voting member of the NCC and NEC, and the NCC may elect additional members of the NEC.

C. Vacancies on the NEC may be filled by the NCC. Attention shall be made by appointing members from diverse geographical areas of the country.

D. NEC members may be recalled by the NCC or by mail or online balloting of the CCDS members.

Section 3. Openness and Accountability:

A. Minutes of the NEC meetings shall be distributed to members of the NCC on a timely basis and shall be available for inspection by any CCDS member.

B. Should a question arise requiring the attention and/or decision of the full NCC, the NEC may call a special meeting of the NCC or conduct mail or online balloting of the NCC.

C. The NEC shall call a special meeting of the NCC or conduct a mail or online ballot upon the written request of 1/3 of the members of the NCC or one-third (1/3) of the CCDS members.

D. The NEC is responsible for bringing political questions and differences before the NCC and the members of CCDS.

ARTICLE VIII. NATIONAL ADVISORY BODY

The convention (see Article IV) or the NCC (see Article VI) may establish a public national body representing the breadth of the CCDS, which shall act in an advisory capacity only. Its members shall be invited, but not obligated, to attend meetings of the NCC.

ARTICLE IX. FINANCES

Section 1. Accountability:

CCDS members are entitled to full information about the organization's finances. Leadership bodies are mandated to keep complete records, operate within agreed-upon budgets and issue regular reports to the members.

Section 2. Ancillary Organization Finances:

Ancillary organizations may develop their own finances. Such organizations are mandated to keep complete records, operate within agreed-upon budgets and issue regular reports to their membership and to the NCC (see Article VI).

Section 3. Fiscal Activities:

A. All funds of CCDS not otherwise employed shall be deposited in FDIC-insured institutions.

B. All expenditures of CCDS funds shall be approved by the NEC, subject to review by the NCC.

C. No loans or advances shall be contracted on behalf of CCDS except as authorized by the NEC. No property owned or controlled by CCDS shall be pledged as security for loans or advances except as authorized by the NEC. No property owned or controlled by the CCDS shall be used as security for personal loans or advances.

D. The National Coordinator, subject to the approval of the NEC, may enter into any contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name and on behalf of the NCC and CCDS.

Section 4. Fiscal Year :

The fiscal year of the CCDS shall be the calendar year.

ARTICLE X. PUBLICATIONS

Section 1. Authority:

The NCC (see Article VI) is mandated to arrange publications in the name of the CCDS.

Section 2. Editors:

The NCC shall elect the editors and editorial board of CCDS publications.

Section 3. Circulation and Finances:

The NCC shall organize a financial and circulation plan to sustain these publications.

ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

Section 1. Amendment by Convention:

These bylaws may be amended at the triennial convention by a majority vote. Advance notice of proposed amendments to the bylaws shall be given to all members of the CCDS in a timely fashion, in accordance with Article IV, Conventions, Section 1, subsection C, and Section 2, subsection B.

Section 2. Amendment by Referendum:

Between triennial conventions, a proposed amendment to these bylaws may be submitted to a referendum of the members by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the NCC (see Article VI), and adopted by a majority of those voting in the referendum.

HISTORY

The original by-laws were adopted at the Chicago CCDS founding convention, July 1994, amended at the Second National Convention in New York City, July 1996, and amended by referendum of the members in October, 2006.

Amended and approved by the NCC Thursday, May 29, 2008

Approved at the 6th Annual CCDS Convention, July 25, 2009, San Francisco, California