

**SOUTH AUSTIN
DEMOCRATS**

**CONSTITUTION
AND
BYLAWS**

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SOUTH AUSTIN DEMOCRATS CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

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SOUTH AUSTIN DEMOCRATS CONSTITUTION

Preamble

This organization, to be known as SOUTH AUSTIN DEMOCRATS, is established and constituted to work through political means for the improvement of the political, social and physical aspects of our neighborhoods, city, county, state and nation.

Article C.1. PURPOSES

C.1.1. SUPPORT PUBLIC OFFICIALS. Work for the election and appointment of public officials at every level of government, who will, in the estimation of the members, work for the best interests of all members of society.

C.1.2. SUPPORT PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES. Promote the success of programs, legislation, constitutional amendments, bond elections referenda, and the like that will, in the estimation of the members, contribute to the maintenance or improvement of the quality of life for all members of society.

C.1.3. PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL FORUMS. Disseminate fact-based information to members and the public through a range of methods, including open discussion forums to address issues relevant to accomplishing the organization's goals.

C.1.4. SUPPORT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY. Support the Democratic Party so as to increase party membership and participation, and voter turnout for elections.

C.1.5. IMPLEMENT PARTY POSITIONS. Implement at a local level policies and positions of the Democratic Party.

Article C.2. MEMBERSHIP

C.2.1. ELIGIBILITY. Any registered voter who is a self-declared Democrat and who resides within Travis County is eligible for membership. Additionally, residents of Travis County who are too young to register as voters and who are 16 or 17 years of age are also eligible for membership with all the responsibilities and privileges of the organization.

C.2.2. NEW MEMBERS. A new member is a person who has never been a member of the organization or a person whose membership has lapsed in excess of 60 days. A new membership is effective upon payment of dues. To be eligible to vote in endorsement meetings or for the election of the executive committee, a new member must have paid dues at least 30 days preceding the date of an endorsement meeting or executive committee election.

C.2.3. RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES. An effective organization requires its members to exercise certain responsibilities and privileges. South Austin Democrats may exercise responsibilities and privileges, including the following:

C.2.3.1. A member may vote on issues presented, and may present motions, in meetings of the organization. To be eligible to vote in endorsement meetings or for the election of the executive committee, a new member must have paid dues at least 30 days preceding the date of an endorsement meeting or executive committee election.

C.2.3.2. A member may function as a member of a committee following appointment to the committee.

C.2.3.3. A member may stand for election as a member of the executive committee only if the member resides south of the Colorado River.

C.2.3.4. A member may represent the organization and transact such organizational business as shall be officially delegated to the member.

C.2.3.5 A member, you must support the Democratic Party.

C.2.4. REVOCATION. A membership in the South Austin Democrats may be revoked for good cause and the member expelled upon the affirmative vote by secret ballot of three-fourths of the members attending a duly called meeting.

Article C.3. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

C.3.1. COMPOSITION. The executive committee shall be composed of the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and three general members. The executive committee shall be responsible for the general supervision of organizational affairs, including effective functioning of each committee, planning the business agendas for regular or special meetings, and effective and efficient conduct of organizational business.

C.3.2. ELECTION. Members of the executive committee shall be elected from the current membership at a duly called meeting for a one-year term from the date of election. Notice of the election of the executive committee must be distributed to all members at least 15 days prior to the date of the election. Elections shall be conducted by secret ballot on any contested races.

C.3.3. PRESIDENT. The president shall preside at meetings of the organization and of the executive committee, and shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. The president is authorized to co-sign all checks drawn on the account of the organization.

C.3.4. VICE PRESIDENT. The vice president shall fulfill the duties of the president in his or her absence, and shall be an ex-officio member of all committees. The vice president is authorized to co-sign all checks drawn on the account of the organization.

C.3.5. TREASURER. The treasurer shall be responsible for the collection and disbursement of the organization's funds, shall maintain an accurate record of all receipts and expenditures, and is authorized to co-sign all checks drawn on the organization's checking account. The treasurer shall present a written report on the status of organization finances at all regular meetings, or at other times when such reports shall be requested by a majority vote of the organization, the president, or the executive committee. The treasurer shall also file financial reports required by

the Texas Ethics Commission, and shall insure that SAD is in compliance with the rules of the Texas Ethics Commission. The treasurer shall also be responsible for maintaining the current roster of organizational membership.

C.3.6. SECRETARY. The secretary shall keep an accurate record of the business, decisions, and actions of the organization and the executive committee, including voting results, and shall report such meeting minutes at each regular meeting. The secretary shall accumulate and maintain the central permanent file of such records. The secretary shall also be responsible for meeting notices.

C.3.7. GENERAL MEMBERS. The three general members of the executive committee shall participate by voting, consulting, and advising the officers concerning the business and supervision of the organization.

C.3.8. REMOVAL. A member of the executive committee shall be removed from office for good cause upon the affirmative vote by secret ballot of three-fourths of the members attending a duly called meeting of the SAD membership.

C.3.9. VACANCY. Should a position on the executive committee become vacant for any reason, the remaining term of the position may be filled according to relevant provisions of Robert's Rules of Order, including nominations and voting by the membership at a duly called meeting. The term of office for a replacement concludes at the next regular election of the executive committee.

Article C.4. STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

C.4.1. STANDING COMMITTEES. Standing committees may be established by majority vote of the organization or a majority vote of the executive committee.

C.4.2. SPECIAL COMMITTEES. The president may appoint special committees either for a determinate period of time or for the period of a specific task or project.

Article C.5. MEETINGS

C.5.1. TYPES. Gatherings of the South Austin Democrats shall include regular meetings, and endorsement or other special meetings. All membership meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the bylaws.

C.5.2. QUORUM. A quorum shall be required to transact organizational business. A quorum shall be no less than ten percent of the members on the secretary's roll.

C.5.3. VOTING ELIGIBILITY. Voting at meetings of the general membership shall be limited to members in attendance, with certain exceptions for disabled members, or a member who is in a hospital or is seriously ill and home bound and who cannot appear at the election endorsement meeting. A simple majority by members of the executive committee is required. No proxy votes will be accepted.

Article C.6. AMENDMENTS AND BYLAWS

C.6.1. AMENDMENT. The constitution may be amended only by an affirmative vote of two thirds of the members present at a duly called meeting.

C.6.2. BYLAWS. Bylaws to the constitution may be adopted or amended by a majority vote of the members at a duly called meeting, providing such bylaws do not conflict with provisions of the constitution. Constitutional provisions shall prevail to the extent that any provision of the bylaws is in conflict with the constitution.

C.6.3. NOTIFICATION. A proposed amendment to the constitution or bylaws may not be considered at a meeting unless the membership has been notified of details of the proposed amendment at least 15 days preceding the date of the meeting.

C.6.4. RULES SUSPENSION. Specific bylaws may be suspended only upon the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members present at a duly called meeting.

SOUTH AUSTIN DEMOCRATS BYLAWS

Article B.1. MEMBERSHIP

B.1.1. Membership Options. Two categories comprise the annual membership options.

A *regular* membership shall be available for a fee of \$10 per person per calendar year. The executive committee in its discretion may waive the membership fee for situations that warrant such action.

A *sustaining* membership shall be available for a fee of \$60 per person or couple per calendar year. A sustaining membership provides supplemental support for organizational operations.

B.1.2. Fee Payment. Membership fees are effective for a calendar year. Enrolled members shall pay the annual fee to the organization by the second Tuesday in January. Dues paid in the last quarter of the year will be considered payment for the following year.

A grace period of 60 days (second Tuesday in March) occurs for members who do not pay the fee by the second Tuesday in January. A delinquent member is eligible to vote and pay dues at any meeting *within the grace period*. Delinquency of dues *in excess of 60 days* will result in removal of the member from the secretary's roll.

Article B.2. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

B.2.1. Meetings. The president or vice president may call meetings of the executive committee. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the executive committee. Meetings of the executive committee shall require at least 24 hours notice, and shall be conducted in accordance with *Roberts Rules of Order, Revised*.

B.2.2. Nomination and Election.

B.2.2.1. Nominations in January. Nominations for the executive committee shall occur annually in January, with notification to all members at least fifteen days preceding the date of the duly called meeting. Notification may include the list of positions to be filled. A nominations committee shall nominate a slate as provided by Section 2.2.3., and nominations may be made from the floor. All nominations shall be verified for candidate eligibility.

B.2.2.2. Candidate Eligibility. No member shall be a candidate for more than one position on the executive committee. No member shall be eligible for election unless he or she resides south of the Colorado River within Travis County and has been a member in continuous good standing for at least two years immediately prior to the nomination.

B.2.2.3. *Nominations Committee.* The president shall appoint in November a nominations committee of at least three members to nominate a slate for the executive committee term in the upcoming year. The nominations committee shall present its report at the regular meeting in January.

B.2.2.4. *Election in February.* Executive committee elections shall occur annually in February with notification to all members at least fifteen days preceding the date of a duly called meeting. The election shall be conducted by secret ballot. Votes for write-in candidates shall be accepted provided the candidate's eligibility is verified.

A candidate for president, vice president, treasurer, or secretary must receive a majority of votes cast for the position to be declared the winner. In the event a candidate does not receive a majority of votes cast for the position, a runoff election will be held between the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes. The three candidates who receive the highest number of votes for the general member positions shall be declared the winners.

Any run-off elections shall be conducted in March with notification to all members at least fifteen days preceding the date of a duly called meeting for the election.

B.2.2.5. *Election Committee.* An election committee shall conduct the election. Immediately following the closure of nominations in January, the president shall appoint an election judge and as many assistants as needed to serve as the election committee. No candidate shall be eligible to serve on the election committee.

The election committee shall certify the qualifications of each nominee with assistance from the SAD secretary. The committee shall prepare ballots for secret voting, listing in alphabetical order the names of each candidate for each respective office in the order specified in the constitution. Such ballots shall not contain any numbers or marks that would allow identification of voting members. The election committee is also responsible for preparing ballots for any run-off election. The SAD secretary shall furnish an alphabetical list to the election judge of all members eligible to vote.

B.2.2.6. *Timeline.* Nomination and election of the executive committee shall normally occur under the following schedule:

- November:** President appoints nominations committee.
- January:** Nominations committee nominates a slate of officers and general members before dissolving as a committee; nominations are accepted from the floor; following nominations, president appoints election committee.
- February:** Election committee conducts election of officers by secret ballot.
- March:** Election committee conducts any runoff election before dissolving as a committee.

Article B.3. STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

B.3.1. Endorsement Meeting Committee. The president shall appoint a special committee for the purpose of assisting the executive committee in planning and coordinating arrangements for endorsement meetings. The appointment will usually be made two months in advance of the meeting. The committee shall function as provided by the Bylaws, Article 5.

B.3.2. Membership Recruitment Committee. A standing committee for the purpose of recruiting and assisting new members may be elected annually or appointed by the president. Recruitment efforts by the committee may include coordinated activities with South Austin precincts and area high schools and colleges.

B.3.3. Bylaws Committee. A standing committee for the purpose of reviewing and maintaining the bylaws may be elected annually or appointed by the president.

Article B.4. MEETINGS

B.4.1. Regular Meeting Schedule. Regular meetings of the South Austin Democrats shall usually be held on the second Tuesday of each month.

B.4.2. Notification. Members shall be notified of regular or endorsement or other special meetings fifteen days preceding the date of the meeting. Notification methods may include announcements at preceding meetings, U.S. mail, electronic mail, and telephone. Use of postcards shall be contingent upon budgetary resources, and members may elect to be notified only electronically.

Article B.5. ENDORSEMENTS

B.5.1. Purpose and Meeting. An endorsement by the South Austin Democrats is an official declaration of the confirmed support of a majority of eligible members casting ballots for a candidate, a program, or a position on an issue. Endorsements may be considered only at a duly called regular or special meeting. The executive committee shall decide the format of any endorsement meeting.

B.5.2. Endorsement Meeting Committee. The committee's responsibilities in planning and coordinating arrangements for endorsement meetings may include:

- researching candidate voting records in Democratic Primary Elections;
- developing specific and incisive questions from a variety of sources, including SAD member suggestions, and maintaining a question bank for general questions;
- notification to, and liaison with, candidates and other Democratic clubs regarding the event;
- arranging and coordinating activities for a moderator, timekeeper, panel, member sign-in, ballot distribution, ballot collection by a method that preserves anonymity, and refreshments, if any.
- Only invite Democratic Candidates to speak to the membership for endorsements.

B.5.3. Executive Committee Responsibilities. As ex-officio members of the committee, the president and vice president shall be apprised of all plans and arrangements for the endorsement meeting. The executive committee retains the responsibility for the use of membership lists, and counting and disposition of ballots.

B.5.4. No-endorsement Option. Ballots prepared for the purpose of endorsing a candidate, program, or position shall include an option for “no endorsement,” which shall be included in the tabulation of the voting results.

B.5.5. Voting. Endorsements shall be determined using the “instant runoff” voting method by which voters may rank candidates for each office. Each voter’s highest ranked (first choice) candidate is counted, and any candidate receiving a majority of first-choice votes receives the endorsement. If no candidate, including the “no endorsement” option receives a majority of first choices, the candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. All ballots are recounted for each voter’s highest ranked candidate and the “no endorsement” option who has not been eliminated. The process of eliminating candidates and recounting ballots continues until one candidate receives a majority. This voting method has the benefit of allowing all voters to participate in selecting the “no endorsement” option winner in the absence of a majority in the first round of voting.

B.5.5.1. Ballot Instructions. Written instructions provided to voters shall conform substantially to the following specifications:

“For each position, vote for each candidate by marking your first choice as number ‘1’, your second choice as number ‘2’, and so on for every candidate for the position. If you rank only one candidate per position and that candidate is eliminated in runoff balloting, you will not participate in runoff decisions. You will automatically participate in a runoff by ranking all of the candidates for each position. Do not mark the same number beside more than one candidate. Do not skip numbers.”

B.5.5.2. Ballot Counting. Endorsement ballots shall be tabulated in the following steps:

B.5.5.2.1. Count the first choice marked on each ballot. Any candidate who received a majority of the first choices shall receive the endorsement. If no candidate received a majority of first choices, proceed to the next step for an instant runoff, including an additional round of balloting.

B.5.5.2.2. Eliminate the candidate who received the fewest votes.

B.5.5.2.3. Recount every ballot to tabulate the votes for the remaining highest-ranked candidates. Any candidate who received a majority of the highest rankings shall receive the endorsement. If no candidate received a majority of highest rankings, proceed to another round of balloting.

B.5.5.2.4. Repeat steps B.5.5.2.2. and B.5.5.2.3. until a winner is determined. The process of eliminating the candidate with the fewest votes and recounting all ballots shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes in a round.

B.5.6. Unopposed Candidates. A candidate who is not opposed in an election is eligible for an endorsement if the candidate anticipates a challenger from a different party in a subsequent election in the current election cycle.

B.5.7. Public Announcements. Following an endorsement decision by the organization, the executive committee shall ensure timely public announcements of the endorsement through all available media, contingent upon the availability of the organization's budgetary resources.

B.5.8. Election Runoff. Candidate endorsements in a general election shall continue in effect for any candidate who must participate in a runoff election for the endorsed position. In the event of a runoff election in which the organization's endorsed candidate does not participate, the organization may hold an endorsement meeting for the runoff election on the first Tuesday following the general election.

B.5.9. Individual Endorsement. Should a member of the executive committee, or a member of the organization, publicly make a personal endorsement that conflicts with an official decision of the organization, his or her association with the South Austin Democrats shall not be used to lend strength to his or her endorsement. Violation of this section shall constitute grounds for removal.

Article B.6. FUNDING AND EXPENDITURES

B.6.1. Political Expenditures. No financial support from the SAD treasury shall be given to any candidate, program or position unless the candidate, program or position has been duly endorsed by the organization. Any political expenditure, including those for candidate support following an endorsement or for the Yeller Dawg event, shall require a majority vote of the membership and shall comply with relevant requirements of the Texas Ethics Commission.

B.6.2. Non-political Expenditures. Non-political operating expenditures over \$100 shall require prior approval of either a majority of the members of the organization at a duly called meeting or a majority of the executive committee. The president may approve expenditures of up to \$100.00. The president or the treasurer shall report such expenses at the next duly called meeting.

B.6.3. Property Use. The use of all property of the South Austin Democrats, whether financial or material, including membership lists, voting lists, and research information, shall be limited to purposes that directly serve the organization and shall be subject to duly adopted rules. Membership information shall not be shared with non-members without the approval of a majority of the executive committee. Members who are entrusted with such information or other property shall be apprised of the responsibilities identified in this section. Upon approval of the executive committee, the organizational mailing list (name and mailing address only) may be provided free to any endorsed candidate, or to any entity at a cost of \$50.

B.6.4. Check Signing. All organizational checks shall be signed by two of the three following officers: Treasurer, President, and/or Vice-president. Except in an emergency, an officer should not sign a check that will result in a benefit or payment to the officer.

Article B.7. GENERAL PROVISIONS

B.7.1. Communications. Communication among members may occur through postcard notifications or publications approved by the executive committee. The organization may maintain an electronic mail service for the benefit of its members. Subscription to the mail service shall be voluntary and limited to members. The executive committee shall adopt protocols necessary to administer the orderly use of the electronic mail service.

The president shall generally be responsible for communicating with the news media or other external groups regarding the organization's actions or operations.