

Northside DFA BYLAWS

Northside Democracy For America (NDFA) has a mission to elect socially progressive, fiscally responsible, and ethically committed Democrats to office at all levels of government, with the overarching goal of increasing the progressive nature of government. To accomplish this, we have established the following bylaws:

Bylaw 1 – Membership

Section 1: Monthly meetings are open to all who follow the procedures of our meetings.

Section 2: Voting members are those who are aged fifteen years or older, who have participated in three campaign activities during the year preceding the meeting at which a vote is taken, and have attended three membership meetings in the previous year, including the meeting at which the vote is taken. Once membership has been established, campaign activities beyond the original three may be substituted for attendance at membership meetings; in order to retain voting membership under this provision, the member must petition the Steering Committee, including the full list of qualifying campaign activities.

Section 3: Campaign activities must be for NDFA adopted or endorsed candidates, or be other designated NDFA featured activities. Additional guidelines may be established by the Steering Committee.

Section 4: Campaign activities only count toward voting membership when participation occurs after attendance at one membership meeting.

Section 5: Meeting attendance and campaign-activity participation will be verified by a member of the steering committee or his/her designee.

Section 6: The Steering Committee may remove from voting membership those who are consistently disruptive. Such a member shall be notified in writing, and may appeal to the Steering Committee. Such removal need not be discussed as an order of business at the general membership meeting.

Bylaw 2 – Leadership

Section 1: The officers will include a chair and a treasurer. Other officer positions may be defined by the Steering Committee as needed.

Section 2: Duties of the officers are:

- A) The chair presides at meetings, and keeps the membership informed;
- B) The treasurer is responsible for the inflow and outflow of funds, the keeping of accounts, and the filing of required reports in a timely manner.

Section 3: There will be a Steering Committee comprised of the officers and up to 8 at-large members, not to exceed 10 members.

Section 4: The Steering Committee is responsible for determining the agenda for the monthly meetings.

Section 5: The Steering Committee is responsible for selecting from among its members or from the membership as a whole the persons who will perform particular functions required to keep the group functioning smoothly. This includes selecting a membership chair and other officers deemed necessary from the Steering Committee as a whole. While the persons who agree to do those tasks are responsible for them, the Steering Committee is jointly responsible for ensuring that those tasks and the tasks of the officers are performed.

Section 6: Steering Committee members are committing to regular attendance at membership meetings and Steering Committee meetings. They also commit to assume tasks to keep the group functioning. Steering Committee members must also maintain voting membership.

Section 7: Elections of officers and Steering Committee At Large members shall be held every two years, in the spring of even-numbered years after the primary..

- A) Nominations for chair, treasurer, and Steering Committee At Large members will be made at a membership meeting. Voting members may nominate themselves. No one who is not present may be nominated, unless she/he has previously indicated interest and willingness to one of the current Steering Committee members.
- B) Candidates may speak on their own behalf at the nomination meeting.
- C) Elections will be held at the meeting following the nomination meeting. Members unable to attend that meeting may vote by giving a proxy vote to any current Steering Committee member. A paper proxy may also be given to another voting member.
- D) Elections for Officers and Steering Committee members will be done by paper ballot, rather than a show of hands. Votes will be counted by the Steering Committee; any voting member may observe the vote count which will occur immediately following the conclusion of the meeting. Winners must have achieved at least 50% of total votes.
- E) Elections are effective immediately.

Section 8: Should either an officer or a Steering Committee member be unable to fulfill his/her responsibilities, due consideration will be given to the circumstances, and the remaining Steering Committee members shall have discretion to either retain the incapacitated member or remove said member from office.

Section 9: Should a Steering Committee member resign, the remaining Steering Committee members may decide to hold a "Special Election" to replace him/her, following the guidelines above. The decision of the Steering Committee must be announced to the membership.

Bylaw 3 – Voting

Section 1: A valid vote requires that at least half of the voting members present (or voting by proxy) vote or formally abstain.

Section 2: The matters requiring a vote of the voting members:

- A) Decisions regarding endorsement and adoption of candidates;
- B) Election of officers and Steering Committee members;
- C) Adoption of the bylaws and any changes thereafter. A specific section of these bylaws may be suspended by a two-third (2/3) vote of the voting membership present at any membership meeting for a single-stated purpose.

Section 3: Procedures for the endorsement and adoption of candidates shall be as follows:

- A) Any candidate present will be asked to leave the room for the debate and vote on his/her race;
- B) Endorsement of a candidate requires votes in favor from 75% of the voting members participating in the vote;
- C) Only previously endorsed candidates may be adopted. Adoption of a candidate requires votes in favor from 90% of the voting members participating in the vote;
- D) Deactivation or revoking endorsement or adoption of a candidate requires votes in favor from 75% of the voting members participating in the vote;
- E) Voting members may abstain. This is not counted in the percentages listed above.
- F) Adoption votes and endorsements not covered by Section 3.G must be voted on at a meeting subsequent to the meeting addressed by the candidate or campaign representative. Usually, this will be the month following the presentation, but may be delayed for further research or other reasons.
- G) Under special circumstances, the Steering Committee may ask the membership to vote to endorse a candidate at the meeting at which the candidate spoke, e.g., when the election is scheduled close to the date the candidate is scheduled to speak. If the voting members present agree to vote, the vote will be held open for a week past the meeting so that voting members not present have an opportunity to send their votes to the Chair. Because such votes may not allow members sufficient time to research their decisions (compared to our standard procedure whereby members don't cast their votes until a month after a candidate's presentation), members who participated in the vote at the meeting may change their votes during the week the vote is open. The vote at the meeting will be by secret ballot but with the voters' names attached -- names that only the Steering Committee may see -- so that changes during the week following the initial vote can be verified by the Steering Committee. At the meeting, only the total number of votes for and against each candidate, and the number of abstentions in each case, will be announced.

Bylaw 4 – Endorsement and Adoption of Campaigns

Section 1: Definitions.

- A) Endorsement of a candidate means that the candidate may list NDFA as an endorser, and that any campaign activities in which our members participate count toward voting membership. However, there are no guarantees that any NDFA volunteers or other resources will be committed to the campaign.
- B) Adoption of a candidate means that NDFA will commit our resources to that candidate's campaign. A liaison from NDFA will be appointed to each adopted campaign; that liaison is responsible for the flow of information between NDFA and the campaign, and also for coordinating or organizing campaign activities for NDFA members.

Section 2: Candidates must be proposed by a voting member of NDFA to be considered for either endorsement or adoption. Candidates who wish to be endorsed or adopted by NDFA must be invited by the Steering Committee to make a formal presentation of candidacy that includes a request for endorsement at a membership meeting; this may be done by the candidate or a representative invited by the Steering Committee. No candidate will be required to meet a "litmus test" on any particular issue to qualify for endorsement/adoption.

Section 3: Any number of candidates may be endorsed. No more than 4 candidates may be actively adopted during a particular election cycle.

Section 4: Revocation or suspension of endorsement or adoption is automatic under the following circumstances: the candidate dies, drops out of the race, suspends campaigning, or loses the primary. Under other circumstances, revocation will require a vote of 75% of the members present and voting at a membership meeting.

Section 5: Adoption, but not endorsement, may be made inactive when 75% of the members present and voting at a membership meeting agree that the adopted candidate who has won a primary has no need of our active support in a general election. An inactive adopted candidate may still list us as having endorsed him/her. The limit on adopted candidates does not include “inactive” adoptions.

Section 6: NDFA supports or opposes only referenda and other issues that are election-based. Included as “election-based” are those intended to increase or suppress voter turnout.

Bylaw 5 – Quorum

Section 1: A quorum for any meeting of the Steering Committee shall be a majority of the members thereof.

Section 2: A quorum for any meeting of the general membership of Northside DFA shall consist of 30% of all voting members.

Bylaw 6 – Meetings

Section 1: Northside DFA shall meet once a month, on a regular day agreed on by the membership (currently, the first Thursday of the month). Each meeting will include an opportunity for members to make announcements and suggestions for future activities.

Section 2: The Steering Committee shall meet prior to the regular monthly meeting to plan the meeting agenda. The agenda for the monthly membership meeting is based on input the members.

Bylaw 7 - Decision Making Procedures

Section 1: Northside DFA prefers decision making through consensus, debate and in certain cases voting. To that end, Roberts Rules are discouraged and are not incorporated here within.

Section 2: Decisions requiring votes may only be made at regular monthly meetings. The Steering Committee may also present other items for decision to the membership as warranted by the situation.

Section 3: Announcements of probable votes: prior to the meeting, an announcement to the membership must be sent indicating the possibility of a vote on any matter. If a vote comes up from discussion among the membership at the meeting, an announcement must follow the meeting allowing non-present voting members to participate in the vote.

Section 4: Items requiring a vote or a decision will be presented to the membership with a discussion lead by a member of the steering committee or a designee. The goal of the discussion is to present a range of thoughts and ideas that will assist the membership in making a decision appropriate for the whole group.

Section 5: Responsibilities of the Discussion Leader

- A) Present an overview of the topic to be discussed including an indication of possible actions, outcomes or votes that may be expected.
- B) Lead a discussion that encourages all meeting attendees to participate and provides opportunity for those who wish to participate. The discussion format is at the discretion of the leader.
- C) Keep the discussion on topic and on schedule.
- D) Bring the discussion to a point of closure where a decision or next action may be made.
- E) If the discussion item is entitled to a vote as outlined in these bylaws, the leader will be responsible for calling that vote.

Bylaw 8 – Funds

Section 1: All NDFA funds are the responsibility and are under the control of the Treasurer.

Section 2: These funds shall be used to support the activities of NDFA.

Section 3: NDFA shall raise and disperse funds in accordance with all laws governing such activities.

Section 4: Members may be encouraged from time to time to contribute money directly to endorsed/adopted campaigns, but there is no requirement to do so. Such funds are not NDFA funds, are not reported to the Treasurer, and are not controlled by NDFA or by the Treasurer.

Bylaw 9 – Changes in By-Laws

Section 1: Major changes in the bylaws shall be discussed by a committee formed for that purpose. Any voting member is free to join that committee; at least one Steering Committee member shall participate in the committee.

Section 2: These bylaw changes shall be posted on the web page, or otherwise made available to the membership, at least one week before the meeting at which they will be discussed.

Section 3: Minor or grammatical changes may be made at a membership meeting by a group consensus.

Section 4: Changes will take effect after the end of the membership meeting at which a passing vote has been recorded.

Section 5: For a change in the bylaws to take effect, two-thirds (2/3) of those voting must vote to approve.

Section 6: The current bylaws shall be posted on the web page.