

Democratic Socialists of America
National Political Committee
Meeting of June 6-7, 2009
Minutes

Present: Theresa Alt, Virginia Franco, David Green, Mike Hirsch, Barbara Joye, David Knuttunen, Frank Llewellyn (National Director), Simone Morgen, Erik Rosenberg (Youth Organizer), Michele Rossi, Joseph Schwartz, Tim Sears, Herb Shore, John Strauss, Maria Svart (YDS Coordinating Committee), Corey Walker (Saturday only).
Absent: Chris Maisano (YDA Coordinating Committee)

Barbara Joye chaired Saturday morning.

Frank Llewellyn, **National Director**, summarized points from his written **report**; there was discussion and the report was subsequently accepted.

Erik Rosenberg, **Youth Organizer**, summarized his written **report**; we discussed it and later accepted it. Maria Svart volunteered to help phone to get people to come. Virginia Franco suggested getting permission to copy Cornel West's CD *Democracy Matters* for use by youth activists.

DSA-Youth Relations were discussed. Joe Schwartz suggested a *Democratic Left* article emphasizing that faculty should make students aware of YDS/DSA. Maria suggested that the Youth Conference do a workshop on transitioning to DSA. Erik offered to compile a list of everyone who is graduating, so that DSA could send a letter of congratulations and let locals know where they are moving.

Lay of the Land. Joe summarized his report on the current political situation and what DSA should be doing. We discussed it. Corey Walker urged doing public political education, perhaps in conjunction with the Convention, under the title: "Economic Literacy for Economic Justice".

Corey Walker chaired Saturday afternoon.

Theresa Alt summarized the **Program Committee report**, verbally adding state fiscal crises to the issues for especial attention. The report was accepted unanimously.

Barbara Joye supplemented the **Local Development Committee report** with word of activity in Indiana and Twin Cities, and new local in Wichita and interest in one in Conway AR, regrouping in DC and Philadelphia, and potential interest in Los Angeles and Cleveland. She requested that Frank send the LDC geographic clusters, so that the committee could begin organizing new locals. The LDC and the Youth Organizer agreed on the need to keep one another informed. The NPC accepted the LDC report.

Convention Planning - Program. We talked about issues for discussion, also about needing training workshops and making the convention attractive so that people would

come. David Knuttunen moved to refer the discussion to the Steering Committee. It is the consensus of the group that there will be some plenaries with big-name speakers to draw people. There must be decision-making. There must also be workshops. The SC will publish a timeline for Convention planning to the NPC in two weeks. By August 1 there should be a tentative program and some name speakers. After further clarification this passed unanimously.

David Knuttunen chaired for the rest of the afternoon.

Discussion then turned to **other**, more immediate **program** and **local action** issues in the third part of the Program Committee report. Joe urged adding the state fiscal crisis and the crisis around retirement into the program. Theresa urged adding visibility for socialism and DSA. The Program and Local Development committees will take these additions into account. Maria will email the committees on how YDS does conference calls with local activists explaining the convention process, how to recruit, and briefing on some issues we are working on.

Health Care Resolutions

Herb Shore motivated his resolution. There was extensive discussion and a number of changes to the language were made and accepted as friendly. After amendment it read:

On the Struggle for Universal Health Care

DSA reaffirms its support for single-payer health insurance as the most just, cost-effective and rational method for creating a universal health-care system in the United States. In the House of Representatives, John Conyers has introduced H.R.676, the Expanded and Improved Medicare for All Act. This bill has 77 co-sponsors. In the Senate, Bernie Sanders has introduced S.703, the American Health Security Act of 2009, his bill has not yet attracted co-sponsors. These two pieces of legislation take different approaches to universal health insurance, but both take for-profit insurance companies out of the picture. DSA asks our locals to contact their senators and representatives, and encourage them to co-sponsor these bills if they have not already done so.

DSA notes with dismay that the current discussions and hearings in Congress relating to national health insurance have excluded single-payer health insurance from the discussion. The plans under discussion presume a large role for the existing insurance industry; possibly, in competition with a Medicare-like public option. We strongly support single payer over these other alternatives. In particular, we feel it is vitally important to include supporters of single payer in the discussion around all possible plans, and condemn the exclusion of these voices in both President Obama's Health Care Summit and in the hearings of the Senate Finance Committee. Particularly, in the discussions of the public options, the ideas and experience of health-care professionals committed to the single-payer approach would provide essential input.

Even taking the above into account, the current political situation provides the best opportunity for serious health-care reform in a generation. We do not accept the position that unless we get everything we want, we are willing to see that opportunity disappear. We do believe, however, that the insurance industry is powerful enough that the current political dynamic could result in a "health care reform" that is, in fact, worse than nothing at all, because it would create a public plan that is designed to fail.

Therefore, even while we do everything we can to ensure that single payer gets a fair hearing, we must state our minimum requirements for possible alternatives to single-payer health insurance. Our minimum position is that any plan **must include a strong public-provision component**, one

that can compete with the private insurance options. In evaluating proposed plans, the devil is, unfortunately, in the details. Among the criteria to be considered:

- All employers and individuals must be eligible to choose the public plan, possibly during an annual open-enrollment period.
- The plan must be government run, operated by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services or by a similar agency.
- The public plan must have the ability to negotiate drug prices.
- The public plan must be allowed to negotiate reimbursement rates, possibly pegged to Medicare rates.
- The public plan must, like Medicare, allow participants to choose their own doctors.

Short of these provisions, whatever comes out of Congress will not be real reform. Health care is a human right and must be available to all without economic barriers.

DSA recognizes that there is strong support for a single-payer plan in several states. In fact, California would have a single-payer system today if Senate Bill 840 had not been vetoed by Gov. Schwarzenegger. Therefore, DSA **insists on an opt-out provision** from any national plan that would allow individual states to set up their own single-payer plans and to use Medicare, Medicaid and similar federal funds allocated within the state in that state plan.

In summary, DSA asks our locals and activists to engage in the following activities in support of health-care reform:

1. Urge Senators and Representatives to co-sponsor H.R.676 and S.703.
2. Support the right of single-payer proponents to have their position heard in the congressional debate.
3. Insist on the inclusion of a strong public component in any health-care reform legislation.
4. Insist on the inclusion of a state opt-out so that individual states can enact their own single-payer plans.

The resolution, as amended, passed with all present voting for, except Theresa abstaining.

Joe moved a second resolution:

Resolution on DSA Action for Universal Health Care

The NPC calls for the National Director to issue a call to arms on DSANews and, more importantly, to phone all local leaders to urge that their locals immediately join the fight both to get a hearing for single payer and also to make sure that any bills that come out of committee to floor of Congress include a strong public insurance component and a state single-payer opt-out provision.

It passed unanimously.

David Green chaired Sunday morning.

Budget and Finance Committee Report. David Knuttunen summarized the report. Frank promised that 500 letters in the first round of Debs Club invitations would go out by June 24, the last day before his vacation. Discussion focused on buttons. David Knuttunen moved to add \$700 to the budget to make 3000 buttons, and this passed unanimously. Theresa moved that suggestions for a contest to design the button for 2010 be referred to the Budget and Finance Committee, and the vote to refer was unanimous. Tim Sears moved that Budget and Finance also take up the idea of making DSAer John Sweeney's retirement an occasion for a fundraiser, and this too was unanimous. The report of the Budget and Finance Committee was adopted unanimously.

Middle East Resolution

There was extensive and at times heated discussion of the resolution redrafted by Joe and modified by Mike Hirsch. A number of further modifications to the wording appeared to be consensual, but the unanimous vote was to refer the amended resolution to the Steering Committee.

We discussed **electoral strategy** for 2010, including the pros and cons of the PAC doing independent campaigns. One suggestion was that the PAC put an organizer in a key area with many members, which might help to build DSA. Another was for the PAC to issue an ad that itself becomes a story in the media. Tim moved to refer such ideas to the Program Committee, which passed unanimously.

Chartering and Dechartering Locals

Barbara Joye moved to charter the new Wichita KS local; Michele Rossi seconded and chartering passed unanimously.

David Knuttunen moved that the Local Development Committee should make every effort to contact people in the Reading-Berks and Northern New Jersey locals and to report to the Steering Committee by the end of the July 4 weekend. The Steering Committee may act to decharter these locals on the basis of that report. This passed unanimously.

National Convention

Frank Llewellyn proposed that we aim for 325 delegates. This number divided into total membership yields the proportion of members to delegates. It passed unanimously.

Frank proposed a Convention fee of \$175 for delegates, which would cover coffee and pastries but not lunches. It passed unanimously.

Frank proposed a new system for travel shares as laid out in Rule #38, with ground travelers paying a travel fee of \$75. This passed unanimously.

Minor amendments to the draft rules concerning listserves in #11 and #12 and required votes in #20 were made, after which the Provisional Rules were adopted unanimously.

Tim Sears chaired Sunday afternoon.

Committee Reports

John Strauss reported for *Democratic Left* and there was some discussion. Herb will write an introduction to the health care resolution, which will be published in the upcoming issue. The report was accepted unanimously.

Herb reported on electronic communications and requested help, especially with regard to putting videos on the web. People are asked to send links to YouTube videos and graphics to dsasandiego@cox.net. Frank agreed to send sample letters to the editor to Herb, who will make them part of the Resources page. The report on electronic communications was accepted unanimously.

The National Political Committee adjourned to allow time for a meeting of the DSA Fund Board.

The NPC then reconvened.

Michele reported for the **Personnel Committee** that reports on both Frank and Erik are being analyzed and there will be full reports to the NPC in September. This report was accepted unanimously.

Frank reported for the **Political Action Committee** that a letter from the FEC had been answered. The report was accepted unanimously.

We discussed **visibility for DSA** and socialism. Joe enumerated several successful references in national media to DSA. Many new ideas and strategies were brainstormed. Theresa agreed to make copies of a recent interview of Joe for all locals. Mike offered to give a convention workshop, and Barbara offered to help. Joe promised to work with Frank and Erik on getting Cornel West to talk about us on YouTube.

Mike promised to convene a conference call of the Political Education Committee.

After evaluations the NPC adjourned.

Submitted by Theresa Alt