

Pass the Hat

Proposed Addition to Article II of DSA National Bylaws: Require that National Pays Stipends to Locals

Section 7.

In addition to any procedures determined for the sharing of dues, the National Organization shall pay a standard monthly or quarterly stipend to each Local, whether or not incorporated as a separate entity, that (1) has a valid bank or credit union account into which the stipend can be deposited; and (2) regularly provides the National Organization with updated contact information for the Local and its leadership. Locals may use their stipends for any lawful purpose in their sole discretion, with the exception of electoral contributions or expenditures implicating campaign finance requirements.

The standard stipend shall be no less than \$100 per month if paid monthly or \$300 per quarter if paid quarterly. The standard stipend may be adjusted upward by the NPC, but shall always be the same for all Locals receiving it.

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Sponsors:

76 co-sponsors from 35 different chapters signed on at the time of submission. Ask your chapter, caucus or delegates to the Convention to sponsor this amendment. More join on every day! [You can show your own support by signing on yourself!](#)

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Why Are We Proposing This?

Pass the Hat: We Must Invest in Our Chapters in Order to Grow

We have to invest material resources in chapters if we want to see our membership grow. \$100/month would allow chapters across the country to do the following, *without* requiring overtaxed core organizers to spend their own money footing the bill:

- Rent safe, inclusive meeting spaces

- Provide transportation to members traveling for regional meetings and events

- Provide food and snacks for meetings and new member orientations

- Print or purchase t-shirts, flyers, cards, posters, and other propaganda, or purchase buttonmakers and other means of propaganda production

- Purchase books and print reading materials for political education

- Much, much more!

The baseline \$100/mo stipend is a very small portion of the national budget (only \$180,000/year if **all** of the 150 chapters we have now qualify), but is enough to

pay some basic chapter expenses without requiring core members in small chapters to foot the bill for everything.

DSA Needs to Better Distribute (and Redistribute) its Resources

Socialists should redistribute wealth! This proposal effectively does that by providing funds to chapters, the vast majority of which are small and lack resources.

National currently only provides a very small amount of funding to chapters in the form of dues sharing. Chapters lack financial resources for basic needs, like holding meetings, printing literature, or funding their efforts. If we expect chapters to do local, regional, and/or national work, they must be funded!

Current dues sharing perpetuates disparities between chapter finances.

Members pay annual dues by default, but can opt in to monthly dues. National returns a small fraction (20%) of *monthly dues* to the home chapters of members who opt in to paying monthly dues. This is only approximately \$75,000/year across all chapters, and most members paying monthly dues reside in larger, wealthier chapters.

Strengthen Bonds Between Chapters and the National Organization

Many chapters are skeptical of National and see little incentive to stay affiliated. We must rebuild faith in the National Organization by creating a real material reason for chapters to stay affiliated and to strengthen bonds with National.

Chapters frequently request money for various things, but, too often, chapters that are well-connected to the NPC and National's staff are the only ones to hear back. This proposal reduces the administrative burden on both chapters and busy staff by providing a (nearly) automated stipend, freeing up staff from the hassle of responding to reimbursement requests.

Currently, many members are shifting from paying dues or donations to National to giving directly to their chapters, because they do not believe that money sent to National is used effectively.

FAQ - Some Responses

Concern: How can we afford paying up to \$180,000/year on this? Shouldn't we spend it on national campaigns voted on by the membership?

Answer: Many chapters can't even commit meaningfully to working on national priorities because they lack the funding to do so. This stipend helps us facilitate more and better work on priorities campaigns.

Another Answer: \$180,000 is about the same as what National recently voted to spend on CRM and VAN access through The Movement Cooperative, a purchase that many chapters will not effectively be able to use unless they already have the infrastructure to run intensive, data-oriented campaigns.

One More Answer: This is an investment that will pay for itself over time. If our small chapters have the resources to focus on organizing, instead of scraping by just to fund meeting spaces and purchases of basic needs, they will bring in more members. More members = more dues!

Concern: Larger chapters don't need stipends, shouldn't we just give them to chapters with fewer members?

Answer: As socialists, we should be promoting universal benefits in all of our work. By universally giving each chapter \$100/month, we remove the unnecessary administrative work of checking specific criteria, and get the money to chapters more quickly. Plus, it goes without saying that not all larger chapters are well-off, and in any case they should be supported too!

Concern: How can we give stipends to unincorporated chapters? Isn't that a huge legal risk? Would national be sending money to members' personal bank accounts if the chapter is unincorporated?

Answer: Chapters would need to have a bank or credit union account in their own name to qualify. Stipends would not be paid to individual members. Unincorporated associations that are not separate 501c4-registered entities can often get bank accounts, but it does depend on the particular state and financial institution. The point is to pay the stipend to any chapter that does have a valid bank account in its own name, not to force chapters to incorporate if they don't need to. However, depending on state law and local financial institution policies, some chapters may need to incorporate to take advantage of the stipend.

Concern: Why can't chapters use the stipend for electoral expenses? Isn't that unfair?

Answer: Electoral expenses are unique because they often come with very complicated campaign finance law requirements. The stipend may not be used for any electoral expenses that could create additional legal obligations for the national organization.

Concern: Why is this a bylaw and not a resolution, isn't it wrong to tie National's hands?

Answer: The stipend would be a new program, different from dues sharing, so it needs its own section in the bylaws.

Another Answer: There needs to be a mandatory baseline for providing chapter support that National is required to follow. As we've seen with the passed-but-unfulfilled Bail Fund resolution from the 2017 convention, which instructed National to create a bail fund to support members arrested during direct actions, the National Organization and the NPC sometimes simply ignore resolutions. This proposal builds in flexibility for the NPC to increase the stipend later if it would be helpful, but the \$100/month or \$300/quarter baseline needs be codified to ensure a minimal level of chapter support.

Concern: Didn't the NPC vote against co-sponsoring this amendment?

Answer: Yes they did. There is broad support for this and we wanted to give national leaders a chance to join us.. Members getting to vote on this bylaws resolution is the next step, and we hope you'll agree that passing the hat benefits all of us. Vote yes to pass the hat, and come [build with us](#).