

# Support the Locals and Make DSA Accessible for All

## **Resolution #83**

Read the full text of the Resolution here: [www.SupportTheLocalsMakeDSAAccessible.Today](http://www.SupportTheLocalsMakeDSAAccessible.Today)

### **Pass the Hat:**

- *We must use our national resources to give tools, infrastructure, and support to Locals.*
- We must use our national collective resources to ensure every Local has the support and tools they need for effective, powerful organizing.
- Many tech and accessibility tools and services can be acquired, built, or maintained at a lower cost overall when we use the strength of our large national organization.

### **Listen to the Locals:**

- *The first task is to ask the Locals what they have, and what they need.*
- We are very excited that DSA is making big strides towards providing tech tools to Locals. However, it is frustrating that nobody asked the Locals first how they're working, what tools they have, and what tools they need. Instead, that was decided for us. This Resolution provides a path to continuing our efforts and big strides to providing tech tools to Locals, based on listening to the Locals.
- This resolution creates a committee and directs it to survey the needs of Locals, and produce reports to inform National decisions and Local work on an annual basis. This empowers National to make more informed decisions and empowers all members to assess those decisions.

### **Fight Exploitation:**

- *Accessibility must be a priority, not a choice.*
- When DSA and our Locals organize without accessibility, we are not making choices of convenience, we are making choices of exclusion. That is an affront to the agency of disabled comrades.
- We must make our organizing accessible, and accessibility can require resources. Too often when resources are limited, costs for accessibility get deprioritized by the people able to show up and participate in decisions in an inaccessible space.

### **One foot in the institutions, one foot in the streets:**

- *If we don't plan to build our own tools before they give in to the DCCC Blacklist, how else will we get our feet in the institutions?*
- Most tools that are key to electoral campaigns are run by companies seeking profit, with pressure from organizations like the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee to not provide their tools to organizations that may challenge the Democratic establishment. Making a long-term plan with the goal of building open-source tools, where possible, would dramatically reduce the cost of those tools.
- Campaigns are increasingly powered by expensive tech tools that Locals can't afford with their typical budgets, requiring them to forego these tools or fundraise for them. Providing tools to Locals or developing alternative, open-source tools eliminates this cost and empowers all Locals to run successful campaigns more readily, whether it's to put our feet in the institutions or in the streets.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Concern:** National is already taking big steps to provide tech tools to Locals, why do we need more?

**Answer:** We're very excited about the big steps we're taking towards providing more tools and support to Locals! We also want to make sure we both listen to Locals about what tools they need, and that we give

organization some long-term assurance that a portion of the budget will be dedicated to this work, so that our organization, and particularly the National Tech Committee, can be empowered to make long-term plans.

**CONCERN:** The accessibility goals are unrealistic.

**ANSWER:** The accessibility goals are ambitious, but not unrealistic. We may, in fact, never get to 100% compliance, because we are an organization that is constantly growing and adding new chapters. Nothing less than 100% is the goal we must shoot for, or else we're essentially telling our comrades that their contributions, and by extension they themselves, don't matter to us.

**CONCERN:** Why can't locals fundraise for the resources they need?

**ANSWER:** They can and they should. This resolution doesn't preclude any needs or prevent chapters from doing more for themselves. It simply sets a higher baseline of support.

**ANOTHER ANSWER:** One chapter may be able to raise thousands for tech or accessibility tools while a smaller chapter may raise very little or nothing at all. No chapter should be told to go without the essential tools they need to either get started or perform essential functions.

**CONCERN:** We should be focusing on national action that will improve accessibility at the policy level.

**ANSWER:** We should! Approving this does not preclude focusing on national action to improve accessibility at all. Approving this will allow more people with accessibility needs that are not being met to participate in such national action in a way they cannot now.

**CONCERN:** This is too much money.

**ANSWER:** It is not.

**ANOTHER ANSWER:** The truth is building an accessible organization will not be cheap. If we are unwilling to compromise the ability for all to participate in and organize with DSA, we must dedicate resources accommodating the participation of our comrades with accessibility needs. Accessibility is expensive because capitalism devalues people with disabilities and has created a society that is hostile to their very existence. We're trying to build something better, and we cannot wait to start.

**ANOTHER ANSWER:** Based on the projected 2019 budget, the purchase of the NGP VAN voter database software for \$180,000 is equal to about 3% of the national budget. Committing to spend at least 3% of the budget towards providing tech tools to Locals is about equal to or less than what DSA is currently planning to spend on providing to Locals. The difference is how we're spending money that we're already spending and how we're planning for the long term.

**QUESTION:** How do you expect the National Tech Committee to do all this?

**ANSWER:** We don't! We would like to get to the point of building and developing our own tools, but all we're directing the National Tech Committee to do is use reports from the Support the Locals Committee and recommendations of the Accessibility Task Force to develop long-term plans for approaching and meeting the needs of the organization though some combination of building our own tools and acquiring tools at scale to provide them to Locals once we know what we want to do, we can better plan how to do it.

**ANOTHER ANSWER:** The engagement around this process through the reports to members and surveys would potentially provide more opportunity to get people with relevant skills interested in volunteering with the Tech Committee. As the committee shifts its focus towards providing support to Locals, it will also eliminate or alleviate the need to make the hard choice of whether to commit to working directly with the Local or volunteering with the National Tech Committee.