CPUSA Constitution

CONSTITUTION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Adopted at 30th National Convention, June 15, 2014

PREAMBLE

The Communist Party USA is of and for the U.S. working class. Our U.S. working class is multiracial and multinational. It unites men and women, young and old, gay and straight, native-born and immigrant, urban and rural. We are employed and unemployed, organized and unorganized, and of all occupations – the vast majority of our society. We are a party of the African-American, Mexican-American, Caribbean, Central and South American, Native American, Middle Eastern, Central, South and East Asian and Pacific Islanders, and all racially and nationally oppressed peoples, as well as women, youth, and all other working people.

The roots of the Communist Party extend deep into our nation's soil, even far beyond our founding in Chicago in 1919. We build on the legacy of those who fought against slavery, for the right to organize unions, for civil rights and for women's vote and reproductive rights. We apply the scientific outlook developed by Marx, Engels, Lenin and others in the context of U.S. history, culture and traditions.

The need for the Communist Party is as great as ever. Capitalism has cast billions of people around the world into poverty. It afflicts humanity with endless wars. It institutionalizes racism and women's oppression, denies youth the hope of a future, and fuels discrimination against gay, lesbian and transgender people, religious minorities, immigrants and people with disabilities. Capitalism pits worker against worker in a global race to the bottom. Corporate interests wage a never-ending campaign to roll back people's hard-won democratic rights. Capitalism's insatiable drive for profits has poisoned the Earth's land, sea, and air. Capitalism treats people and nature as disposable commodities in order to transfer the wealth of the planet to a handful of multi-billionaires.

Our basic principles are rooted in today's struggles, informed by our history and experience, and guided by our scientific outlook and vision of socialism. Our bedrock principles include the leading role of the working class in the struggle for social change; that working class unity is essential, and the fight against racism and for immigrant rights are essential to build that unity.

In solidarity with working people around the world, we stand in opposition to U.S. imperialism – the system by which U.S. corporations use their economic power, along with the political and military power of our government, to exploit workers, pillage the environment and corrupt governments around the world just as they do here at home.

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Our vision is one of "Bill-of-Rights socialism" in the USA, where working people – those who produce all the riches of society – will have political power and will collectively decide priorities for investment and distribution of our nation's wealth – for education, health care, housing, nutrition, recreation, arts, culture and science in a clean, non-polluting economy.

Our organizational practices are based on democracy, equality, unity of action and transparency. We do not set ourselves apart from the rest of the working class movement and organizations; we have no private agenda, no special interests. We welcome all who share our goals to join us or work together in alliance.

With pride in our past, and with confidence in our working class and its future, we hereby establish the Constitution of the Communist Party of the United States.

ARTICLE I – NAME

SECTION 1. The name of this organization shall be the Communist Party of the United States of America.

ARTICLE II – PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIZATION

SECTION 1. In the Communist Party, all decisions are arrived at through democratic procedures, emphasizing the maximum input from members. Unity is the strongest weapon working people have in the struggle to advance their interests. By making a commitment to unite around a program of action, members strengthen the Party and help unify the working class and peoples movements.

Collectivity is the basic style of work of the Party. Through group discussion and action, we seek to develop and apply the best possible plans to advance the interests of working people. The principles outlined in this article are used in practice by many peoples organizations to foster democratic decision-making and unity in action. Historically, these principles have been known as democratic centralism.

SECTION 2. The National Convention is the leading body of the Party. It elects a National Committee to function between conventions. Districts and clubs shall act in accord with the decisions and policies of the National Convention and National Committee.

SECTION 3. Decisions in all Party bodies are arrived at by majority vote or by consensus at club and district meetings unless anyone requests a vote. Decisions of leading committees on major questions shall be reported to all other Party bodies. Clubs and districts shall keep national leadership informed of their activities. Any member disagreeing with a decision of a Party body may appeal the decision to the next higher body. Appeals may be made to successive leading committees.

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Members who disagree with a decision are expected to refrain from organizing against or publicly undermining the decision, including during the appeal process.
SECTION 4. The election of officers and leading committees at all levels shall be carried out with the fullest participation of the members of the Party bodies. Elections shall be based on a review and evaluation of the work of the elected body and of the individuals proposed for office. In elections to all Party committees, conventions and conferences, steps shall be taken to maximize the representation of workers, youth, people of color and women.
Officers and leading committees are responsible both to the bodies which elected them and to the higher leading committees. All officers and members of leading committees may be released or removed from office by a two-thirds vote of the committees to which they are responsible.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. The Communist Party warmly welcomes all who support our program to apply for membership. We welcome all equally, regardless of race, national origin, sexual orientation, gender or religious belief. All members must be 18 years of age or older and currently living in the United States. Clubs or districts may admit members under 18 in exceptional circumstances.
SECTION 2. An application for membership may be received by any Party member or by state/district or national offices, including via the Communist Party's website. The application shall be promptly referred to the appropriate club or district committee which will respond to the applicant as soon as possible. All applications shall be accepted unless the club, district or national leadership has information that the application was false or that admitting the applicant would be harmful to the Party organization and its goals. Upon acceptance, applicants shall be promptly notified that they have been admitted to Party membership and they shall be referred to a Party club or collective to work with where possible. For applicants from areas where no organization is in place, the National Committee shall set up appropriate forms for welcoming and incorporating new members. Membership in the Communist Party is completely voluntary.
SECTION 3. Party members shall to the best of their ability support the goals of the organization through implementing its program, paying dues and supporting its associated publications. The National Committee shall set dues requirements and rates and establish a mechanism for their collection.
SECTION 4. Every member of the Party shall have an equal opportunity to participate in the collective analysis of the current political situation and to plan and carry out the work of the Party. Every member shall have an equal vote in the elections of the Party collectives to which that member belongs.

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Members shall strive to attend meetings of their Party club or other collective and to improve their understanding of scientific socialism, to work for the aims and policies of the Party, and to seek to win new members to its ranks. They shall also support and circulate online and printed Party materials.

SECTION 5. A Communists prioritize the fight for equality as the cornerstone of the working class unity essential to the advancement of our common interests. It shall be the obligation of all Party members to struggle against all racist ideologies and practices. Communist Party members fight for the full social, political and economic equality of African-American, Mexican-American, Caribbean, Central and South American, Native American, Middle Eastern, Central, South and East Asian and Pacific Islanders, and anyone subject to discriminatory treatment based on race, religion, nationality or color. Communists oppose all expressions of anti-Semitism.

It shall be the obligation of all Party members to fight for full equality for immigrant workers and their families, including the right to a path to citizenship.

It shall be the obligation of all Party members to fight for the dignity and full social, political and economic equality for women.

It shall be the obligation of all Party members to fight for full social and civil rights for all regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression..

SECTION 6. All Party members who are eligible shall belong to their respective labor unions. Party members will strive to build work place organization and solidarity in whatever manner possible.

SECTION 7. Members of the Communist Party shall work to strengthen the labor unions, civil rights, peace, youth, student, religious and other community organizations and social networks in which they participate. They shall promote the voice and effective participation of the working class. They shall promote unity with the allies of the working class in the course of fighting for common goals.

SECTION 8. All members who are eligible shall register and vote in all public elections, wherever possible.

ARTICLE IV – CLUB ORGANIZATION

SECTION 1. The basic unit of the Communist Party shall be the club, based on community/neighborhood, workplace or other standards set by the National Committee. The club shall serve as a collective for members to discuss and analyze local and national political challenges, make plans to activate members and allies in on-going struggles and provide for educational activities.

The club is a place where grassroots conditions help formulate district and national policy, and where district and national programs and policies are

adapted to local conditions and implemented. The club should be a center for local organizing. It should also be a warm, supportive and open community for all those fighting for social justice and socialism. Clubs are a primary center for fund raising, including collection of dues, for political education, for organization, and for discussion and promotion of the Party's online and printed publications.
Section 2. Clubs shall elect a chair and other officers appropriate to the club's size and needs. Elections shall be at the annual club conference, by secret ballot for any contested position. The purpose of the annual club conference shall be to project the plan of work for the coming year and to examine the club's work in the previous year.

ARTICLE V – STATE (DISTRICT) ORGANIZATION

SECTION 1. The National Committee has the exclusive authority to establish and recognize state and district organizations, which may cover one state, part of one state, or more than one state. They shall be known as the "—– State Committee, Communist Party USA," the "—– District, Communist Party USA," or the "Communist Party of —–, CPUSA." The National Committee shall establish procedures to administer clubs and members in areas where no district organization exists.
SECTION 2. The state (or district) organization shall be comprised of all members and clubs in one state (or district).
SECTION 3. The highest body of the state (or district) organization is the State (or District) Convention, which shall meet at least once every four years during the convention discussion period prior to the National Convention. Each club in the state (or district) shall elect delegates to the convention in such number as the State (or District) Committee may determine, provided that the number of delegates to which each club is entitled shall be in proportion to its membership. Where there are members not attached to clubs, the State (or District) Committee may make special provisions for their representation at the State (or District) Convention. Class, national, gender, and age composition shall be considered in the election of delegates to the State (or District) Convention.
SECTION 4. Members of the State (or District) Committee shall be elected in such manner and number as the State (or District) Convention may determine. All elections to the State (or District) Committee shall be by democratic process, including secret ballot for any contested position.
The State or District Committee shall elect such officers as it deems necessary. A vacancy among members of the State or District Committee may be filled until

the next Convention by majority vote of the members of the State or District Committee, by secret ballot for any contested position.

SECTION 5. Special State or District Conventions shall be called by a majority vote of the State or District Committee or upon the written request of clubs representing one-third of the membership.

The State or District Committee shall make a financial report to all regular State or District Conventions.

The State or District Committee shall meet at least four times a year. In districts covering large geographic areas, this requirement may be met up to three times per year through teleconferencing. A request by one-third of the members of the State or District Committee, or by one-third of the clubs, for a review of a state or district policy or adoption of a new policy requires that such a discussion be held by the State or District Committee.

ARTICLE VI – NATIONAL CONVENTION

SECTION 1. The highest authority of the Party is the National Convention. It is authorized to make political and organizational decisions binding upon the entire Party. The decisions of the National Convention shall guide all Party organizations and members.

SECTION 2. Regular National Conventions shall be held every four years. In case of extraordinary circumstances, a National Convention may be postponed beyond the four-year limit by a three-fourths vote of the National Committee.

SECTION 3. The National Convention shall be composed of delegates elected by each State and District Convention by democratic process, by secret ballot, in such number, in approximate proportion to the membership it represents, as the National Committee may determine. All delegates so elected shall have been members for at least one year prior to the date of the Convention.

SECTION 4. A special National Convention shall be called when there is an affirmative vote of 40 percent of the members of the National Committee or a majority vote of all State and District Committees. The office of the National Committee shall circulate any official request from any State or District Committee for a special National Convention to all other State and District Committees for their action. The time and place of special conventions shall be fixed by the National Committee. The basis for representation shall be determined in the same way as that for regular conventions.

SECTION 5. Prior to a regular National Convention, at least four months shall be provided for a convention discussion period encompassing all levels of the Party's organization and membership in which clubs and other collectives can consider policies, problems, reports, resolutions and other documents coming before the

convention. The National Committee shall establish the broadest possible forums to facilitate this discussion. During this discussion, all Party members and organizations are encouraged to express their views, review their experiences and propose policies and plans for the organization's on-going work, including changes to the Party Program and amendments to the Constitution. All questions of policy and tactics and on the work and composition of leading committees are matters for consideration by the Convention. All previously adopted policies and decisions, however, remain in effect during the convention discussion.

SECTION 6. Each National Convention shall determine the number of members of the incoming National Committee. Election of the National Committee by the National Convention shall be by secret ballot.

In the election of the National Committee, in addition to individual merit, such factors as class and social composition and wide geographic representation shall be considered.

Eligibility for election to the National Committee requires membership for at least one year preceding the election.

ARTICLE VII – NATIONAL COMMITTEE

SECTION 1. Between National Conventions, the National Committee is the highest authority of the Party, representing the Party as a whole. As such, it is authorized to make decisions and take action necessary to the good and welfare of the entire Party, and to act upon all problems and developments occurring between conventions.

In the fulfillment of its duties, and in the exercise of its responsibilities, the National Committee shall guide and direct the political, organizational and educational work of the Party and shall organize and supervise its various departments and committees.

The National Committee shall encourage the widest discussion by the membership on questions of both theory and activities. It shall ensure the organization of broad platforms to facilitate such discussions.

The National Committee shall organize and direct all undertakings of importance to the entire Party. It shall administer the national treasury. The National Committee shall submit a financial report to each National Convention.

SECTION 2. Vacancies in the National Committee may be filled by majority vote of the National Committee. Members may be released or removed by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members of the National Committee.

SECTION 3: The National Committee shall elect from its own membership such officers as it decides upon. The National Committee shall establish such other committees as it deems necessary to carry out its work. It may delegate its powers and responsibilities to those officers and/or committees as appropriate.

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All such officers and committees shall be responsible to the National Committee.
SECTION 4. Between National Conventions, the National Committee is responsible for the enforcement of the Constitution and carrying out the policies and plans adopted by the National Convention.
SECTION 5. The National Committee shall not make any major policy change until it has submitted the proposed change in draft form to the Party organization for debate for specified periods and for recommendations thereon. In an emergency, which must be affirmed by a two-thirds vote of the National Committee, the National Committee may adopt another procedure for making a major policy change, including a referendum vote of the entire membership or the calling of special enlarged, delegated conferences on a national or regional basis. In the discussion of such major policy changes, rules for convention discussion shall apply in regard to the proposed policy change only, except that the period of discussion may be determined by the National Committee.
The officers of the National Committee shall make known to the members of the National Committee any request of any member of the National Committee for either a review of a policy or the introduction of a new major policy question. A request by one-third of the members of the National Committee for review of a policy or for adoption of a new policy requires that such a discussion be held by the National Committee.
SECTION 6. The National Committee shall meet at least three times per year. The officers or one-third of the members of the National Committee may call additional meetings.
SECTION 7. Summaries and reports of National Committee meetings shall be made available to State and District Committees and shall appear in digest form in printed or electronic form available to the Party membership.

ARTICLE VIII – ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRITY

SECTION 1. The Communist Party is a voluntary organization; all those who meet its membership requirements are free to join and leave the Party at will. Likewise, the Party has a corresponding right to determine its own membership.
SECTION 2. Comrades should assist each other to overcome weaknesses and shortcomings as much as possible and prior to taking any actions.
Subject to the provisions of this Article, any member of the Party may forfeit their membership in the Party for actions detrimental to the interests of the Party and the working class, for violating provisions of this Constitution, for making false statements in an application for membership, for financial irregularities, or for advocacy or practice of racial, national or religious discrimination, on the basis of gender or sexual orientation.

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No proceeding seeking the forfeiture of membership shall be undertaken without written notification to the member of the action and the basis for it.
Subject to the provision of this Article, a member who is a strikebreaker, a provocateur, engaged in espionage, or who advocates violence or terrorism, or who participates in the activities of any group that acts to undermine any democratic institution through which the majority of the American people can express their democratic rights forfeits membership in the Communist Party.
SECTION 3. A request to take action against the membership of an individual may be made by any member of the individual's club or collective or appropriate higher body having jurisdiction.
All such requests shall be handled in an expeditious manner by a hearing committee elected by the club or appropriate higher body. The hearing committee shall hear the evidence, determine the facts, and make its recommendations. The committee shall then disband.
SECTION 4. Any member whose membership is challenged, except publicly self-admitted informers and provocateurs, must be notified of the charges against them, shall have the right to participate in the hearing and to bring supporting witnesses. The burden of proof shall be on those bringing the challenge.
SECTION 5. After receiving the report of the hearing committee, the club or leading committee having jurisdiction shall have the right to decide upon the appropriate response. A vote to require the forfeiture of membership must pass by a two-thirds majority. The action shall be reported to the next higher body, which shall conduct an automatic review. In the case of a leading committee acting on the hearing committee's report, the action shall be reported to the club of the member in question.
SECTION 6. Any member whose membership has been forfeited has the right to appeal successively to the next higher body up to the National Convention. Such body shall elect a hearing committee that will set a hearing within 60 days of the date of receipt of the appeal and notify the appellant of the hearing date and location. When, however, the appeal is to a State, District or National Convention, the appeal shall be acted upon by the convention following the filing of the appeal, provided that such appeal is made at least 30 days prior to the convention.

ARTICLE IX – DUES, ASSESSMENTS AND INITIATION FEES

SECTION 1. Initiation fees and dues shall be paid according to rates and procedures fixed by the National Committee.
SECTION 2. The income from dues and initiation fees shall be apportioned among the various subdivisions of the Party as determined by the National Committee.

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SECTION 3. Special assessments may be levied by the National Committee. All local or state (or district) assessments require special permission of the National Committee..

ARTICLE X – AMENDMENT

SECTION 1. This Constitution may be amended by a majority vote of any regular or special National Convention, or by membership referendum initiated by the National Committee or one-third of the state and district organizations. It may also be amended by three-fourths vote of the National Committee and a majority vote of the majority of the State and District Committees. This vote must be preceded by a minimum of a two-month discussion period in the Party organization.

ARTICLE XI – AUTHORITY

SECTION 1. The Communist Party is not responsible for any political document, policy, book, article, or any other statement of political opinion except such as is issued by authority of the National Convention and the regularly constituted leadership of the Party.