

DSA's 2025 convention: Left cover for the Democratic Party

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17 August 2025

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a faction of the Democratic Party, held its 2025 national convention in person in Chicago, Illinois, from August 8–10. The gathering took place amid the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the second year of the Gaza genocide, and the fourth year of the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. At the same time, fascist President Donald Trump presses ahead with mass deportations and the military-police occupations of Washington D.C. and Los Angeles.

None of these burning issues were seriously discussed at the convention, let alone met with any program to oppose them. The political content of the gathering was defined by efforts to shore up support for the Democratic Party and the trade union bureaucracy, with the aim of blocking the development of an independent movement of workers and youth from below.

A dominant theme of the convention was the celebration of DSA member and New York assemblyman Zohran Mamdani's victory in the Democratic mayoral primary. Days later, the *New York Times* revealed Mamdani was receiving advice from Barack Obama—the “deporter in chief” and author of “Terror Tuesdays”—with former Obama aide and ambassador Patrick Gaspard acting as an informal adviser.

This was quickly followed by a *Time* magazine cover story highlighting Mamdani's efforts to reassure Wall Street and big business that “he's ready and reasonable and won't send businesses fleeing to Florida.” At the convention, many delegates wore Mamdani-themed apparel, promoted by the DSA's official account on X.

Reflecting the anti-science policies of the Democratic Party, the 2025 convention—like its 2023 predecessor—appears to have been a superspreader event. Amendments advanced by some delegates to require mandatory masking on the floor failed before the convention began. After the event, several attendees confirmed on social media that they or others had tested positive for COVID-19.

DSA resolves to remain a faction of the Democratic Party

The DSA, and before it the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, have operated within the Democratic Party for more than 50 years. At the convention, delegates resolved to continue this tradition even as the entire political establishment confronts a deepening crisis.

One of the convention's most significant measures was Resolution 07, “Principles for Party-Building.” The resolution declares that while the DSA “commits” to the goal of “becoming an independent mass socialist party,” it will, due to “an undemocratic and uneven electoral system,” adopt a “party surrogate” approach, “acting as a party without a dedicated ballot line.”

And what is the DSA a surrogate or substitute for? The resolution makes

clear that it will serve not only as a surrogate for the Democratic Party, but also for other social and class forces hostile to socialism.

The resolution states that an independent ballot line “is not the primary goal or an indication of political independence” (!) and opens the possibility of running “democratic socialists” under the Green Party, as independents, or even on the Libertarian Party line. “What matters most,” it declares, “is bringing our independent organization and program to races whether on a Democratic, independent, or third-party ballot line.”

Resolution 18, adopted unanimously, pledges the DSA to a massive electoral push in the 2026 midterms through the Democratic primary process. The DSA declares that “utilizing the Democratic ballot line is the most effective strategy for building a socialist party in the United States,” flatly rejecting the possibility of breaking with the capitalist parties.

The resolution insists that congressional campaigns must rely on “greater coalition work with labor unions and congressionally-focused left-wing organizations” and that the DSA must cohere union members behind Democratic Party candidates. The perspective advanced is not one of mobilizing the independent power of the working class, but of bolstering the influence of the unions and securing “a Congressional Socialist Caucus” within the framework of the Democratic Party.

Resolution 18 also calls for the creation of an exploratory committee to run a DSA-backed candidate in the 2028 Democratic presidential primaries. In other words, the DSA is preparing not to build a party of the working class, but to deepen its role as a subordinate appendage of the Democratic Party, providing a “left” face for an organization that is complicit in genocide in Gaza, war against Russia, and the assault on democratic rights at home.

For a “united front” with the Democratic Party and Shawn Fain

As Trump intensifies his attacks on the democratic, social and economic rights of the working class, DSA delegates advanced several resolutions centered on promoting United Auto Workers (UAW) President Shawn Fain, an open supporter of Trump's tariffs, and on the prospect of a strike... in 2028.

The DSA's “labor” resolutions make clear that the organization's central task is to prop up the existing trade union apparatus. The National Labor Commission's “consensus resolution” celebrates the so-called “Stand Up Strike” of 2023 as a model for the future, hailing Fain as a leader of “militant, member-driven campaigns.” In reality, that strike was a betrayal: the UAW kept most autoworkers on the job after the contract expired, dragged out a limited strike for weeks, and then forced through agreements that paved the way for mass layoffs.

Far from drawing lessons from this defeat, the DSA resolution commits to deepening ties to the bureaucracy. It explicitly embraces Fain's call for

a “May Day 2028” strike, lining up the expiration of Big Three contracts five years in advance—an effort to defuse anger and channel workers into a fruitless waiting game. For the DSA, this perspective is not about mobilizing the independent strength of the working class, but about bolstering the credibility of the union apparatus and subordinating workers to a corporatist “plan” coordinated with management and the state.

By encouraging DSA members to take jobs in unionized workplaces, run for union office, and funnel struggles into bureaucratic channels, the DSA seeks to contain and disorient opposition, especially as workers look for ways to organize independently of the apparatus.

Resolution 30, “Fighting Back in the Class War: Preparing for May Day 2028,” was passed unanimously. It has an explicitly nationalist character, declaring its purpose to be a “kind of national project, like [Medicare for All], Bernie [Sanders], and [UAW] Strike Ready, that can unify members and chapters in very different circumstances and can be adapted to a wide variety of conditions.”

The resolution makes clear, however, that its aim is not to organize a real fight by workers. It openly concedes that “a nationwide general strike is unlikely to happen on that date [May 2028].” Rather than mobilizing workers now against genocide in Gaza, mass layoffs, or Trump’s drive toward dictatorship, the DSA presents May Day 2028 as a distant “concrete opportunity” to build “cross-union organization” and renew “ties between the socialist movement and the labor movement.”

The DSA’s promotion of Fain goes hand in hand with its hostility to any genuine socialist challenge within the working class. In the 2022 UAW presidential election, the DSA opposed the campaign of Will Lehman, a socialist autoworker who called for the abolition of the bureaucracy and the transfer of power to rank-and-file workers through the building of independent committees.

DSA tries and fails to distance itself from Zionist origins

While the ongoing US-NATO war in Ukraine, backed by the Democratic Party, was virtually ignored at the convention, several resolutions were put forward concerning the DSA’s position toward Israel, Zionism, and the genocide in Gaza.

Resolution 22, “For a Fighting Anti-Zionist DSA,” was one of the few to pass, with a narrow 675–524 majority (56.3 percent to 43.7 percent). It was considered one of the “stronger” resolutions at the convention because it declared that DSA members who oppose Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), are affiliated with Zionist lobbies, or vote to provide weapons to Israel would be committing “an expellable offense.”

Yet the DSA’s record underscores the hollow character of this posturing. Members currently or formerly in Congress who have voted to fund weapons for Israel—including Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and former Rep. Jamaal Bowman—remain in good standing. Resolutions introduced to expel Ocasio-Cortez and Los Angeles City Council member Nithya Raman over their support for arming Israel and Zionism were not voted on by the convention as a whole but instead referred to the DSA’s newly elected National Political Committee for “consideration.”

Even this limited resolution provoked opposition from sections of the DSA because it constrains their opportunism, as indicated by the large “no” vote. Writing in *International Viewpoint*, Seattle delegates Philip Locker and Stephan Kimmerle complained that the measure “would not have allowed DSA to endorse Bernie Sanders—and with that build an organization.” They added:

It will, if applied, not allow DSA to critically endorse for

example a candidacy of left-wing UAW leader Shawn Fein [sic] for president in 2028, as he is almost as weak on international questions (as can be seen [sic] with position on tariffs) as Bernie Sanders.

Other resolutions calling for a “One Palestinian State” and for “Palestinian Self-Determination” were defeated—30.5 to 69.5 percent in the former case, and 47.68 to 52.32 percent in the latter.

Michael Harrington, the organization’s founder, was a staunch supporter of Israel, an opponent of the anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and an open defender of US imperialism during the Cold War. The DSA continues this legacy today by seeking to channel outrage over the Gaza genocide back behind the very party that armed and financed it from the beginning.

Keynote speaker, Michigan Rep. Rashida Tlaib, promotes Democratic Party politics

Underscoring the DSA’s role as a faction of the Democratic Party, Michigan Representative Rashida Tlaib was invited to deliver the keynote speech at the convention and establish its political orientation.

Tlaib is a member of the Metro Detroit branch of the DSA and one of four Democrats first elected to Congress in 2018 as part of “the Squad,” along with Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts, and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York. None of the other members of the group attended the convention.

In her keynote address, followed by an interview with internet personality Hasan Piker, Tlaib presented a falsified history of the DSA and urged those disillusioned by the Democrats’ support for war, genocide and “capitalistic schemes” to join a trade union or the DSA... and to run for Congress.

Speaking at the convention, Tlaib falsely claimed that the DSA has “always, always been rooted in a growing anti-war movement in our country, one that is centered on dismantling capitalistic systems that benefit from death, extraction, oppression and pain.” While she repeatedly invoked the phrase “capitalistic systems,” she conspicuously avoided any call to replace capitalism with socialism.

In reality, as previously noted, the organization’s founder Harrington was a defender of US imperialism and an open supporter of Israel. Moreover, all three current DSA members in Congress—Tlaib, Ocasio-Cortez, and Texas Rep. Greg Casar—joined every other Democrat in the House last April in voting to provide the Zelensky regime, rife with neo-Nazis and fascists, \$61 billion to continue the US-NATO proxy war against Russia. Last month, DSA member Ocasio-Cortez voted against a resolution that would have stripped \$500 million in US military funding to Israel.

While ignoring the US-NATO war in Ukraine, which threatens the world with nuclear catastrophe, Tlaib focused the first half of her speech on the ongoing genocide in Gaza. Acknowledging the undeniable, she admitted the genocide is a bipartisan policy backed by most of her “colleagues,” including “Presidents Biden and Trump,” who, she said, “believe in those racist tropes that have made Palestinians disposable in their eyes.”

The genocide in Gaza, however, is not an isolated atrocity or merely the product of racism. It is the outcome of a deliberate policy by the US government to advance its geopolitical interests in the Middle East and worldwide. Gaza is one front in a broader war that includes the US bombing of Iran alongside Israeli assaults on Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and

the West Bank, as well as the ongoing US-NATO war against Russia and the preparations for war against China.

Without naming names, later in her speech Tlaib said she condemned “with love” her congressional colleagues who voted to supply weapons to Israel. She made no mention of her own and her fellow Democrats’ support for the 2024 Ukraine war package.

Throughout her speech, Tlaib criticized “establishment Democrats” but never the Democratic Party as a whole. Towards the end of her speech, Tlaib urged DSA members to “make the change we want to see,” citing as examples the Detroit City Council primary win of DSA member Denzel Campbell and the New York City mayoral campaign of Zohran Mamdani.

Tlaib said, “You don’t have to be a DSA member to have been inspired by the primary win of Zohran Mamdani.” Less than two months after his primary victory, Mamdani has already shed much of his leftist talking points, from backing down on his pledges to “defund the police” to appealing to Wall Street and corporate America.

In a follow-up interview with internet streamer Hasan Piker, Tlaib made clear that the DSA is not politically independent, but entirely subordinate to the Democratic Party, aiming only to “pressure” it from within.

“I think it’s a really important moment in the Democratic Party establishment, and I hope they wake up,” she told Piker. “Because doing the same thing over and over again is insane. We lost to a felon; we lost to Trump.”

She added, “My DSA siblings that are here know, you got to get out before they chip at your soul. But there needs to be another group of folks there to agitate from inside.” Under the banner of “diversity,” she urged Piker and other DSA members to “infiltrate more into Congress—a lot more than it is now.”

The DSA, like the Democratic Party it serves, is in deep crisis and an increasingly untenable position. Tasked with putting perfume on the rotten skunk that is the Democratic Party—a party of genocide, war, and Wall Street no less than the Republicans—the DSA is compelled to maintain the fiction that there exists a “left wing” within the Democratic Party and that the capitalist system itself can be reformed.

In reality, the Democratic Party is despised by growing layers of the working class. Increasingly, members of the DSA such as Ocasio-Cortez are also recognized as enemies, hated for betraying workers to the Democrats and the financial oligarchy. Whether voting to fund war, blocking railroad workers from striking, or smothering opposition to mass layoffs, since 2016 every DSA-elected official has proven themselves hostile to the working class and to socialism.

Since its inception in 1982, the DSA has acted as a “left face” for US imperialism. Its founder Harrington openly described its mission as playing a “pro-American, Cold War, State Department kind of role.” The 2025 convention is only the latest confirmation that the class character and purpose of this organization remain unchanged: to defend capitalism, preserve the authority of the Democratic Party, and block the development of an independent movement of the working class.



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