

# DSA declines to endorse its own members in Los Angeles mayoral race

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The 2026 Los Angeles municipal election cycle has emerged as a devastating exposure of the political character of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) and its local affiliate, DSA-LA. There are 14 candidates in the June 2 all-party primary, including incumbent Democrat Karen Bass.

Although two of the candidates challenging Bass claim affiliation to the “democratic socialist” grouping—City Council member Nithya Raman and community organizer Rae Huang—the DSA-LA has refused to endorse either of them.

Leslie Chang, a co-chair of DSA-LA, articulated the organization’s crisis with remarkable candor, saying, “The worst thing we can do right now for our movement is to say, ‘Well, actually, we’re not going to endorse Rae or Nithya. We’re going to do a third thing, which is to issue no endorsement.’” But that is precisely what the DSA leadership in LA is doing.

The refusal to endorse either candidate reflects the erosion of the DSA’s political credibility. After years of promoting electoral politics within the Democratic Party as the pathway to socialism, the organization now finds itself unable to defend the record of its own elected officials or present a coherent alternative.

This crisis has been compounded by the open defection of council member Hugo Soto-Martinez, a prominent DSA-endorsed figure, who has thrown his support behind Bass. This is the extent to which the DSA’s elected representatives are integrated into the Democratic Party establishment and committed to defending its policies, including austerity measures that directly attack the working class.

Over the past decade, the DSA has grown rapidly, transforming itself from a marginal tendency into a significant force in Los Angeles municipal politics, with four members on the City Council (out of 15 total). This growth was driven by the appeal of its “socialist” rhetoric to the mounting discontent of workers facing soaring rents, social cuts, inequality, and attacks on democratic rights, such as the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids. Yet this

very evolution has exposed the organization’s central contradiction: socialist in words, but pro-capitalist in practice.

The mayoral primary has brought this contradiction to the surface. Mayor Bass is seeking reelection amid a deepening fiscal crisis, including a projected \$1 billion budget shortfall. Her administration has responded with sweeping austerity measures, including the proposed elimination of 1,647 city jobs, the largest round of cuts since the 2008 financial crisis.

Yet Bass has received consistent support from DSA-aligned council members, including Raman. Last summer, Raman voted in favor of the city’s declaration of a “fiscal emergency,” a measure that paved the way for mass layoffs and cuts in social programs. This vote was not an aberration, but a demonstration of the DSA’s real function—to impose austerity while maintaining a “progressive” façade.

Raman’s broader record further exposes this reality. Her support for the restructuring of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority has facilitated the expansion of privatization, channeling public funds into the hands of contractors and “nonprofit” agencies. Similarly, Raman initially supported Measure ULA, a proposed tax on luxury real estate transactions, and then reversed herself under pressure from powerful developer interests.

At the time of the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas on Israel, Raman sprang to the defense of Israel. The backlash over Raman’s pro-Israel endorsement led to her censure by the DSA, an expression of crisis within the organization.

These developments underscore the DSA’s inability to reconcile its pseudo-left rhetoric with its integration into the machinery of American imperialism. The DSA’s elected officials are bound by their positions within the state to defend US foreign policy interests, even as the organization attempts to posture as an opponent of war and oppression.

Rae Huang, the other candidate associated with the DSA, similarly offers no alternative. Her campaign rhetoric, centered on pro-renter and pro-sanctuary themes, is indistinguishable from that of mainstream Democratic politicians. In the face of skyrocketing rents, mass evictions

and escalating ICE raids, such rhetoric serves only to channel popular discontent back into the political framework responsible for these conditions.

To fully grasp the crisis of the DSA it is necessary to situate it within a broader national context. On the opposite coast, in New York City, DSA Democratic Mayor Zohran Mamdani is openly collaborating with the Trump administration in pursuit of federal funding for infrastructure projects. His willingness to partner with a fascist president, after vowing to be his “worst nightmare,” has laid bare the organization’s true political orientation.

Mamdani’s efforts to reassure Wall Street and secure more than \$21 billion in federal grants for the Sunnyside Yard development project mark a shift to open collaboration with the most reactionary forces in American politics. This alliance is the logical outcome of the DSA’s strategy of working within the Democratic Party and the capitalist state.

The developments in New York have clearly influenced the approach of DSA-LA. The refusal to endorse either Raman or Huang reflects an awareness that any explicit backing would further discredit the organization. Neither candidate represents even a minimal break with the policies of austerity, militarism and repression. Both are fully committed to operating within the framework of capitalist politics.

The scale of the crisis is underscored by the material conditions facing workers in Los Angeles. The city’s budget cuts come amid a broader assault on living standards, including rising housing costs, stagnant wages and the erosion of public services. At the same time, the federal government has intensified its ICE raids and escalated militarism abroad with the attack on Venezuela and the criminal war of extermination in Iran.

Under these conditions, the DSA’s activities take on an openly cynical character. Its upcoming “Socialist Job Fair,” which encourages workers to “Get a Job to Build a Union,” epitomizes its subordination to the trade union bureaucracy. Through initiatives such as “salting” (getting a job to help organize a union) and “peppering” (getting a job to help energize an existing union), the organization directs young workers into low-wage jobs with the aim of bolstering union apparatuses that are themselves integrated into corporate management and the state.

The DSA boasts of its growing membership, claiming thousands of members in Los Angeles alone. But these numbers cannot mask its political bankruptcy. To the extent that workers and youth join because they are sincerely looking for a socialist organization, the DSA’s crisis grows more acute.

At the highest levels, this trajectory is embodied in figures such as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has emerged as a

leading representative of Democratic Party imperialism. Her recent appearances on the international stage, where she has positioned herself as a defender of US global hegemony, demonstrate that the DSA’s integration into the political establishment is complete. The differences between such figures and openly right-wing politicians are increasingly reduced to matters of style and tactics.

What most concerns the DSA is the growing militancy and radicalization of the working class. Across the United States, workers are entering into struggle against layoffs, austerity and authoritarianism. In Los Angeles, strikes by more than 100,000 workers have taken place or are threatened, and major protests have occurred against ICE raids, war and Trump’s drive to dictatorship.

These struggles are developing in opposition not only to the Republican Party but also to the Democratic Party and its pseudo-left auxiliaries. Workers are increasingly recognizing that their interests cannot be defended within the existing political framework.

It is precisely this independent movement that the DSA seeks to prevent. By tying workers to the Democratic Party and the trade union apparatus, it works to dissipate social opposition.

In opposition to this, the Socialist Equality Party calls for the building of rank-and-file committees in workplaces, schools and neighborhoods, independent of the union apparatus and the capitalist parties. These organizations are necessary to unify workers across industries and national boundaries in a common struggle against the profit system.



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