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The Rhode Island Democratic Party

Amended BYLAWS

2019

ARTICLE I - Name and Membership

SECTION 1

The affairs of the Democratic Party of Rhode Island shall be directed by a committee known as the "Democratic State Committee," consisting of the following members:

- a) two (2) members, one (1) woman and one (1) man from each General Assembly representative district; said members shall be elected in the primary held to nominate a candidate for Governor, and shall hold office for a four-year term until their successors are elected and qualified;
- b) Thirty-two (32) at large state committee members, equally divided between men and women: six (6) members of the minority community, including but not limited to the African-American/Black community, the Latino/Hispanic community, and the Asian-American and Pacific Islander community, two (2) members of the LGBTQIA+ community, in accordance with the Democratic National Committee's Charter. The party chairman shall select 20 At Large State Committee Delegates as follows

- c) five (5) state general officers (Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, General Treasurer) when such officers are Democrats;
- d) four (4) national officers (two (2) U.S. Senators and two (2) U.S. Representatives) when such officers are Democrats;
- e) two (2) national party representatives, one (1) man and one (1) woman chosen by Section 1 Article III;
- f) the thirty-nine (39) Chairs of the city and town committees duly elected by the qualified voters within said city or town and certified by the State Democratic Party;
- g) three (3) members of the Rhode Island House of Representatives to be appointed by the highest ranking Democrat in the House;
- h) three (3) members of the Rhode Island Senate to be appointed by the highest ranking Democrat in the Senate;
- i) the Mayor of the City of Providence; the City of Johnston; the Town of North Providence; the Town of Cumberland; the City of Pawtucket; the City of Warwick; the City of Cranston; when such officers are Democrats;
- j) the President of the Rhode Island Young Democrats;
- k) the President of the College Democrats of Rhode Island.

and also consisting of the chair, first vice-chair, second vice-chair, third vice-chair, fourth vice-chair, secretary, corresponding secretary, recording secretary, treasurer, and assistant treasurer of the Democratic State Committee. All members shall have the right to vote on any matter before the State Committee. Each member shall have one vote, even if he or she holds membership under more than one sub section

SECTION 2

Vacancies in membership occurring from death, resignation, removal from the district, failure of a committee or primary to elect, or other cause shall be filled by the district committee of the representative district in which the vacancy exists. If, after thirty days, said vacancy shall not have been filled in the foregoing manner, then the Democratic State Chair shall fill said vacancy. If any representative district has no representative on the State Committee at the time of the adoption of these rules, the Democratic State Chair shall select qualified electors of said district as members of the Democratic State Committee to represent said district.

ARTICLE II - Officers

SECTION 1

The officers of the State Committee shall be: Chair, First Vice-Chair, Second Vice-Chair, Third Vice-Chair, Fourth Vice-Chair, Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Recording Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer. The offices of Chair and First Vice-Chair shall be members of the opposite sex as will the Second Vice-Chair and Third Vice-Chair. The Fourth Vice-Chair will be the President of the City and Town Chairs' Association. All officers, except for the Fourth Vice-Chair, shall be chosen quadrennially at the meeting held for "reorganization". Provided that quorum is met, a majority of members present shall be sufficient to sustain any vote for the election of officers. Officers of the State Committee have the power to formulate policy regarding availability of State Committee services to Democrats at all levels throughout the state.

SECTION 2

The Chair shall preside at all meetings of the Democratic State Committee and shall appoint all committees unless ordered by two thirds (2/3) of the members of the Democratic State Committee present; and shall authorize all expenditures and payment of bills. In the absence of the Chair, First Vice-Chair, Second Vice-Chair, Third Vice-Chair, and Secretary, a presiding officer Pro-Tempore shall be elected by the Democratic State Committee.

SECTION 3

The Treasurer shall account for all monies collected and disbursed by or for the Democratic State Committee; shall annually submit to the said State Committee a financial report which shall be subject to an audit at the discretion of the State Committee; shall submit such reports as may from time to time be requested by the Chair or by the said State Committee and shall deliver to his/her successor all monies and records in his/her possession belonging to said State Committee.

SECTION 4

The Secretary shall keep a correct record of the proceedings of the Democratic State Committee; shall file all papers, notify all committees of their appointments, keep a list of the officers and members of the various city and district and town committees of the Democratic Party in Rhode Island and perform such other services as may be required by the Democratic State Committee; shall deliver all the books, papers, and property of the organization in his/her possession to the succeeding committees at its first meeting.

SECTION 5

The officers of the Democratic State Committee may be selected from outside of the membership of the committee but must be chosen from among the qualified electors of the State of Rhode Island, and such officers shall, by virtue of their election, become members of the Democratic State Committee and shall hold office until their successors are elected and qualified.

SECTION 6

In the event that a vacancy occurs in any office, other than that of Chair, the Chair shall fill such vacancy until the next meeting of the Democratic State Committee at which time a chair shall be elected, provided, however, that if a vacancy in the office of Chair occurs in any regular biennial election year during the period from June 1st to Election Day, such vacancy may be filled by the State Committee.

SECTION 7

There shall be a Finance Committee appointed by the Chair, of such number as the Chair may determine which shall serve at the pleasure of the Chair. The Treasurer of the Democratic State Committee shall be a member of the Finance Committee to help coordinate plans for raising funds to carry out the objectives of the Democratic Party.

SECTION 8

All checks or demand for money or notes of the Democratic State Committee for under \$25,000 (twenty-five thousand dollars) shall be signed by the Chair or Treasurer of the Democratic State Committee. All checks or demand for money or notes of the Democratic State Committee for over \$25,000 (twenty-five thousand dollars) shall be signed by the Chair of the

Democratic State Committee and shall be cosigned by the Treasurer or the Assistant Treasurer. In the event of an absence of the Chair, Treasurer, or Assistant Treasurer, and when authorized by the Chair in writing, any officer of the Democratic State Committee may sign checks for funds of the Democratic State Committee, provided that written authorization is provided prior to an officer signing.

SECTION 9

All funds received by the Democratic State Committee from the State of Rhode Island, so called checkoff funds under Section 44-10-2(e) of the General Laws may be expended for all Democratic Party purposes and activities permitted by law, except that no such funds shall be contributed to any candidate for public office for purposes of campaign expenditures.

SECTION 10

The Chair shall appoint an Executive Director whose salary and duties will be determined by the Chair and will serve at his or her pleasure. Additionally, the Chair shall appoint a "Sergeant-at-Arms" and "Parliamentarian" to coordinate State Committee meetings.

SECTION 11

There shall be established the following permanent standing committees of the Democratic State Committee appointed by the Chair, of such numbers the Chair may determine, each member thereof shall serve at the pleasure of the Chair. Each individual State Committee Member should serve on at least one of these standing committees although said committees may include persons who are not members of the State committee at the pleasure of the Chair. The Chair also reserves

the right to appoint special temporary committees (ad hoc) in addition to the permanent standing committees as the Chair deems necessary and appropriate.

The permanent standing committees: (a) Finance; (b) Platform/Issues; (c) Public Relations; (d) Diversity; (e) Technology/Technological Support; (f) Campaign Activities; (g) Education/Training; (h) Executive, consisting of all DSC officers.

ARTICLE III - National Party Representatives

SECTION 1

Quadrennially, at its Nominating Convention, the Democratic State Committee shall elect the Rhode Island Democratic State Committee's representatives to the Democratic National Committee and shall be declared to be the Democratic National Committeeman and the Democratic National Committeewoman. In the event a vacancy occurs in either office, the State Committee may fill such vacancy until the next meeting of the Democratic State Committee at which a Chair is to be elected.

ARTICLE IV - Caucuses

SECTION 1

The Chairman may establish and maintain various constituency caucuses to help recruit and organize groups of importance to the Party.

Constituency caucuses may:

- a. Provide an organizational focus for members of a constituency group;
- b. Present issues and act as an advocate for members of the group within the Rhode Island Democratic Party;
- c. Provide contacts to members of the public who are not yet active in party affairs;

- d. Assist in the Democratic Party's commitment to outreach to members of the group and encourage them to participate in party affairs at the local, state and national levels;
- e. Assist in the Democratic Party's commitment to encourage persons who are members of the group to register to vote and become informed about public issues;
- f. Assist in the Democratic Party's efforts to energize and mobilize members of the group to vote for and support Democratic candidates.

SECTION 2

To maintain status as a recognized caucus of the Rhode Island Democratic Party, a caucus shall maintain and submit to the RIDP its list of current members and officers biennially, in every odd-numbered year, by the 31st day of January.

SECTION 3

Caucuses are required to adopt the bylaws of the Rhode Island Democratic Party. Caucuses shall not have their own bylaws.

SECTION 4

Caucuses may raise money to be used for outreach, party building, and any other election activities, provided that no money raised by a caucus shall be used to provide a direct or indirect benefit to any individual candidate. If a bonafide caucus chooses to fundraise for party building or activities enumerated in Section 5 of this Article, they must raise all funds into the Rhode Island Democratic Party. Caucuses shall not have separate fundraising apparatuses or create separate political action committees for the purpose of fundraising.

SECTION 5

Caucuses may not endorse, support, or assist unendorsed candidates for office during the pre-primary or primary period. During general and special elections, caucuses may not endorse, support, or assist any candidate other than a Democratic nominee.

Although caucus members may, as individual citizens, support candidates for office in contested races during the pre-primary or primary period, they may not do so in their official capacities as caucus members or by using their caucus member title. Caucus members may not use the resources, funds, logos, or name of a caucus or the Rhode Island Democratic Party to support any individual candidates other than the endorsed candidate during the pre-primary or primary period.

SECTION 6

Caucuses may not issue press releases, or any external communications related to party activities, including caucus activity, without express and written approval of the party Chair.

SECTION 7

Caucuses may not collect dues from members in any form.

ARTICLE V - Quorum

SECTION 1

Sixty (60) members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

ARTICLE VI - Powers

SECTION 1

The Democratic State Committee when it is not convened in meeting, then the State Committee Chair is hereby vested with the following power and authority:

- a) to have and exercise general oversight of the matter of calling state conventions, and all primaries, and all other conventions relating to party representatives; and to issue calls for primaries to be held in accordance herewith;
- b) in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws § 17-12-4, to file party nominations or to endorse candidates in a primary for any public office whether in town, city, ward, voting district, senatorial district, representative district, congressional district or state, where the town, city, ward, voting district, senatorial district, representative district, or congressional district committee or other party committee, authorized to act, has failed or neglected to file such nomination or endorsements with the proper officials.
- c) to fill vacancies where party convention or primaries have failed or neglected to make or file proper nominations for any cause whatsoever.
- d) in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws § 17-12-5, to fill vacancies caused by withdrawals or for any other cause where a time limit is involved in case of failure on the part of the regular party committee to act at the proper time;
- e) in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws § 17-12-12 and § 17-15-38, to file nominations and/or fill vacancies as provided in the three preceding clauses: b. c. and d. on the next secular day following the expiration of the time within which the regular party committee, convention, caucus or other authority should have acted.

- f) in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws § 17-12-5, to appoint a new town, city, district or other committee to act in such cases, where time is sufficient to enable them to do so within a statutory limit, if the regular committee fails to perform the usual duties of such committee.
- g) in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws § 17-12-5, meet any other contingency that arises under the provisions of the statutes where there is a failure on the part of the party committee to act or where a primary has been adjudged to be void.
- h) to do and perform such additional acts and to exercise such additional powers, duties and prerogatives— as are enumerated and described in Chapter 17 of the Rhode Island General Laws, and other provisions of law.
- i) to authorize the Chair of any subcommittee of the State Committee to perform any such act and to do anything which said State Committee has the power to do or perform;
- j) to do and perform every other act and thing which is necessary incident to the enumerated powers;
- k) to do and perform every other thing, whether related or not related to the enumerated powers which the Democratic State Committee may lawfully do and perform.
- l) to establish constituency caucuses.

ARTICLE VII- Meetings

SECTION 1

There shall be an annual meeting of the Democratic State Committee and any additional meetings shall be determined by Section 2 and 3 of Article VI.

SECTION 2

Meetings of the Democratic State Committee may be called at pleasure of the Chair upon notice given at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting. Any agenda items raised by State Committee members under Article XII Section 2 of these bylaws must be submitted within 7 days of the meeting.

SECTION 3

Whenever sixty (60) members of the said State Committee submit a written request to the Chair for a meeting of said State Committee, said meeting shall be called for and held within twenty-one (21) days of the receipt by the Chair of such request. Notice of said meeting shall be given at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting.

ARTICLE VIII - Conduct of Members

SECTION 1

- a) All public meetings at all levels of the Democratic Party in this state shall be open to all members of the Democratic Party regardless of race, sex, age, color, creed, national origin, religion, ethnic identity, economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression or philosophical orientation.
- b) No test for membership in, nor any oaths of loyalty to, the Democratic Party in this state shall be required or used which has the effect of requiring prospective or current members of the Democratic Party to acquiesce in, condone or support discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, age, color, creed, national origin, religion, ethnic identity, economic status, disability, sexual

orientation or gender identity or expression.

c) The time and place for all public meetings of the Democratic Party on all levels shall be publicized fully and in such a manner as to assure timely notice to all interested persons. Said meetings must be held in places accessible to all Party members and large enough to accommodate all interested person.

d) The Democratic Party, on all levels, shall support the broadest possible registration without discrimination on grounds of race, sex, age, color, creed, national origin, religion, ethnic identity, economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression.

e) The Democratic Party in this state shall publicize fully, and in such a manner as to assure notice to all interested parties, a full description of the legal and practical procedures for selection of Democratic Party officers and representatives on all levels. Publication of these procedures shall be done in such a fashion that all prospective and current members of this State Democratic Party will be fully and adequately informed of the pertinent procedures in time to participate in each selection procedure at all levels of the Democratic Party organization.

f) The Democratic Party in this state shall publicize fully, and such a manner as to assure notice to all interested parties, a complete description of the legal and practical qualifications of all offices and representatives of the State Democratic Party. Such publication shall be done in timely fashion so that all prospective candidates or applicants for any elected or appointed position within each State Democratic Party will have full and adequate opportunity to compete for office.

SECTION 2

The Democratic State Committee shall have the power to decide and administer disciplinary action against any State Committee member for improper conduct in carrying out their official duties, consistent with the Rhode Island General Laws.

- a. Examples of disciplinary action include, but are not limited to, censure, loss of voting privileges, loss of committee position, loss of officership, and loss of membership. All disciplinary actions shall comply with applicable state law, and shall be proportional to the offense committed by the offending member.
- b. Disciplinary action shall be decided based on charges previously presented in writing through the following process guaranteeing adequate notice and due process:
 - i. Any Democratic State Committee member may submit a written complaint to the Executive Committee. Any such complaint shall state that it is being submitted to initiate disciplinary proceedings against a member, including a precise statement of reasons detailing the basis for the complaint, and list the name(s) of the member(s) requesting disciplinary action.
 - ii. Upon receipt or initiation of a complaint, the Executive Committee shall promptly give the member in question a copy thereof. Within 21 days of receipt of a complaint, the Executive Committee shall gather any relevant information, schedule a meeting, and meet to discuss and vote on the question of disciplinary action. Within that time frame, the Member may submit a written response to the Executive Committee.
 - iii. If charges are brought against the chair of the meeting on the question of discipline, the next ranking officer in attendance shall preside.
 - iv. A complaint will be sustained by a majority vote of the Executive Committee

membership. If the Executive Committee finds cause for disciplinary action, the complaint shall be promptly forwarded in writing to the Democratic State Committee with a recommendation for such action for its consideration.

- v. All complaints dismissed by the Executive Committee shall be kept confidential.
 - vi. The Democratic State Committee shall discuss and vote on the complaint at its next scheduled meeting. The Democratic State Committee shall, by a two-thirds vote of its members present and voting, determine whether the Member shall receive disciplinary action.
 - vii. At any meeting on the question of disciplinary action, the Member in question shall be given an opportunity to be heard. The Member is entitled to present written or oral testimony on his or her behalf and examine all of the evidence presented to the Committee.
 - viii. All members of the State Committee and Executive Committee shall identify any potential conflicts of interest they may have and shall recuse themselves from discussions and/or votes as appropriate.
- c. Vacancies in membership occurring from removal shall be filled through the process outlined in Article I.

ARTICLE IX- Local Committees and Candidates

SECTION 1

The Democratic Party voters in each ward, of each of the cities of the state shall, biennially, in every even year, at the primary election held to nominate party candidates, elect a ward committee for each ward, provided, however, that the ward committees in the city of Providence

shall be elected quadrennially, and the Democratic Party voters in each of the towns of the state shall biennially at the primary election elect a town committee for the town.

SECTION 2

The members of the several ward committees in each city of the Democratic Party shall constitute the city committee of the Democratic Party for that city; provided however that for the town of Lincoln, members of the several council district committees of the Democratic Party shall constitute the town committee; and provided further, however, each of the council district committees shall consist of an equal number of members as provided in town committee by-laws. There shall be a senatorial district committee for each senatorial district to consist five (5) members where the senatorial district is contained within a single city or town and to consist of seven (7) members where the senatorial district includes all or parts of two (2) or more cities or towns, there shall be a representative district committee for each representative district to consist of three (3) members, where the representative district is contained within a single city or town, and to consist of five (5) members where the representative district includes all or parts of two (2) or more cities and towns. The representative district committee shall endorse the State Committeeman and Committeewoman from that representative district. The senatorial and representative district committee members shall be qualified electors of their respective districts and shall hold office, respectively, until their successors shall have been duly elected, qualified, and organized.

SECTION 3

No member of a ward, town, or district committee shall hold or continue to hold membership on the ward, town, or district committee, unless that member shall be a qualified elector of the ward, town, or district, except as herein otherwise specifically provided, Ward, district, town and city

committee members shall hold office, respectively from the date of their election until next election of the committees and thereafter until their successors shall have been duly elected, qualified and organized.

SECTION 4

All city, town, and district committees shall organize biennially in the month of January in every odd year provided however, that the city committee of the city of Providence shall organize quadrennially. Each city committee organized under this section may elect not exceeding three (3) officers outside its membership from among the voters of the Democratic Party in the city, and the officers shall, by virtue of their election, become members of the city committee and shall hold office until the next organizational meeting of the committee. Each city committee, each town committee, and each district committee, within ten (10) days after its organization, shall file with the Secretary of State and with the local board a list of its officers and members.

SECTION 5

City, town, and district committees of the Democratic Party in this state may make bylaws or rules not inconsistent with the bylaws or rules of the State Committee and except as herein otherwise specifically provided, the general management of the affairs of the Democratic Party in the respective cities, towns, and districts, including the power to endorse candidates for public or party office, shall be vested in the city, town, or district committee, respectively, subject to all State Committee bylaws and rules.

SECTION 6

Any vacancy occurring in any of the offices of city, town, ward, or district committees shall be

filled by the remaining members thereof and any vacancy occurring in the membership of town, city, ward, or district committee shall be filled by the remaining members of the committee. A statement of that action by any committee shall be filed as in the case of officers and members first chosen.

SECTION 7

If any vacancy shall occur either with respect to any office of a city or ward committee or with respect to the membership of any city or ward committee and the vacancy shall not have been filled within forty-five (45) days of the date upon which the vacancy shall occur pursuant to the provisions of Section 6 of this Article, the vacancy shall be filled by the city committee involved or the executive committee of the city committee or any duly elected subcommittee of the executive committee or by the city Chair if so authorized.

SECTION 8

In the event that a ward committee or a city committee of the Democratic Party of a particular city has failed or neglected to do so, the executive committee of the city committee of that city, or any duly selected subcommittee of the executive committee or the city Chair if so authorized may, within twenty-four (24) weekday hours of the failure, endorse and notify the local board of the endorsement, if any, of the candidates for city council, ward committee member, and mayor as the case may be, to be voted on in the primary.

SECTION 9

Should any controversy, which is not covered and defined by these by-laws or by the statutes of this state, arise between committees or candidates for office in any city or town or in any representative district, as to which is the regular committee or candidate of the Democratic Party,

the State Committee shall have the power to decide which of said committees or candidates represents the Democratic Party in said city or town or in said Representative District, and such decisions when rendered, shall be binding on all Democrats.

SECTION 10

In all cases of apparent conflict between a local community and the Democratic State Committee upon any matter touching the interest of the Democratic Party, the decision of the Democratic State Committee shall be binding upon all Democrats

ARTICLE X - Primaries

The Democratic electors of said district, city, or town, to meet in primary for the transaction of such business as may be set forth in said call, and shall designate the person who shall preside at said primary.

Should it appear to the State Committee that the district, city, or town committee in any district, city, or town has failed to maintain a proper organization of the Democratic Party in its district, city, or town, or has permitted the Democratic Committee or organization to be used against the interests of the Democratic Party, said State Committee may call primaries in the same manner and with the same effect as though there were no Democratic organization in said district, city, or town.

ARTICLE XI - State Party Convention

SECTION 1

There shall be held every even-numbered year a Rhode Island State Democratic Party Convention, wherein the party may select the nominees of the Democratic Party in this state for

Senators and Representatives in Congress, for the five (5) general offices. In presidential election years, the Rhode Island State Democratic Party Convention may select the party's nominees for presidential electors and the names of those presidential electors shall be submitted for placement on the ballot labels for the forthcoming election.

ARTICLE XII - Order of Business

SECTION 1

The order of business at all meetings of the Democratic State Committee shall be as follows:

1. Welcome
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Appointment of Parliamentarian/ Sergeant at Arms
5. Reading minutes of previous meeting for approval
6. New Business
7. Adjournment

SECTION 2

State Committee members may suggest that the Chair add items to the agenda under New Business prior to a meeting of the Democratic State Committee. Advanced proposals should detail the specific item in question, as well as state the reasons why members believe the item should go on the agenda.

ARTICLE XIII - Amendments

SECTION 1

The bylaws of the Democratic State Committee may be altered or amended as follows:

All recommended bylaws amendments must be considered by the Bylaws Committee.

Bylaws changes that are approved by a majority of the voting members present at a Bylaws Committee meeting shall be considered at the next scheduled Democratic State Committee meeting. All bylaws changes considered by the full Democratic State Committee must reach a vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present to be adopted.

ARTICLE XIV - Rules of Order

SECTION 1

In all proceedings before this committee, not specifically provided for in these rules, Robert's Rules of Order shall be the law governing proceedings.

