



# **Bylaws of the General Defense Committee of the Industrial Workers of the World**

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As amended through January 1, 2017.

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## **Preamble**

The aims of this organization shall be to provide defense and relief to members of the working class who are being persecuted for their activity in the class struggle.

Coordinating our efforts will enable the General Defense Committee to oppose the vicious onslaught of the master class with a powerful defense, especially when labor is engaged in industrial strife.

It has been found in past labor struggles that the lack of adequate defense has resulted in many of the most active fighters for labor being arrested and imprisoned for long periods of time or being legally murdered by the employing class. It shall be the purpose of the General Defense Committee to aid those who find themselves persecuted by the powers that be in their struggle for justice and freedom.

It shall also be the purpose of the General Defense Committee to publish and distribute literature exposing the false and reactionary propaganda of the master class.

By organizing the many and centralizing their efforts in each instance, labor will be given the protection of the entire working class, thereby making an injury to one the concern of all.

## **Article I**

### **Section 1 Name**

This organization shall be known as the General Defense Committee of the Industrial Workers of the World, and shall be stated so on membership cards, literature, and letterheads.

### **Section 2 Structure**

**A.** The General Defense Committee shall be composed of GDC Central, GDC Locals, and GDC Regional Locals.

**B.** GDC locals may be known as the "GDC of the IWW" of a particular local IUB or GMB where applicable.

**C.** The official means of communication shall be the GDC Email List at [gdc-list@lists.iww.org](mailto:gdc-list@lists.iww.org). All GDC members so indicating on their membership form shall be subscribed to this list. Members can also communicate with GDC Central via mail at the address printed at the end of this document.

**D.** Upon request, incarcerated members may communicate by mail to the GDC e-mail list.

**E.** The Constitution and Bylaws of the Industrial Workers of the World hereby supersede any conflicting language within the GDC Bylaws as the GDC is bound by the IWW Constitution.

### **Section 3 Locals**

**A.** A GDC local must consist of at least five IWW members in good standing, and membership shall be open to non-members of the IWW who subscribe to the principles and aims of the IWW and GDC. A Regional Group shall be considered a local unless otherwise specified.

**B.** Charters for GDC locals shall be issued and approved by the Steering Committee. A local charter may be placed in suspension by the IU, ROC, RA or GMB with jurisdiction, pending a decision by the Steering Committee to revoke a charter. The GDC local may appeal the decision of the Steering Committee regarding charters to the membership of the GDC.

**C.** A quorum for an official GDC local meeting shall be five GDC members in good standing.

**D.** Each chartered local shall elect a Secretary-Treasurer who shall be the responsible custodian of all records, funds and supplies, coordinating efforts with other locals, and reporting all such business and activities to the local IU or GMB and making monthly reports to the CST of the GDC. The local Secretary-Treasurer will be responsible for all minutes of meetings and his/her own monthly financial report to his/her branch; shall endeavor to keep all members in good standing and aware of all referenda.

**E.** The local's elected Secretary-Treasurer shall be a delegate for the local, and as such is responsible for all initiation fees, dues and assessments taken in by the local, and seeing that all funds are properly maintained and properly recorded, and that the per capita set aside for the Defense Fund is properly deposited with the CST. The local may elect, and the CST may appoint, other delegates as necessary.

**F.** All local officers elected shall be members in good standing of the GDC.

**G.** Each local may modify their local dues structure while keeping the split with GDC Central 50% of dues collected at the rate established by GDC Central, and produce local assessments stamps. No GDC Local may modify their dues structure to be less than \$5 per quarter unless it is for the membership of the incarcerated. A copy of any stamps or structure changes issued by a local must be sent either by mail or email to GDC Central.

**H.** No chartered local shall enact any legislation or motion conflicting with the constitution of the IWW.

**I.** All Locals and Delegates will remit copies of financial records to any member of GDC Central, any member of the GEB or the GST immediately upon request. The requesting body will reimburse copy costs for locals and delegates in hardship, provided receipts are included with IWW Reimbursement Forms. Reimbursement Forms can be found at [www.iww.org](http://www.iww.org) or be mailed by request of GDC Central.

**J.** All Delegates are responsible for maintaining his/her own monthly financial report to their branch or the CST and shall endeavor to keep all members within their jurisdiction in good standing and aware of all referenda.

**K.** Uncleared Delegates and de-chartered locals will remit all GDC supplies and funds to GDC Central.

**L.** Regional Locals shall set initiations, dues and assessments in the region's currency, taking into account the prevailing economic situation. Regional Groups shall negotiate dues share with the Steering Committee and shall produce supplies in the local language as needed.

## **Section 4 At-Large/Regional Delegates**

**A.** The Central Secretary-Treasurer may issue credentials authorizing certain members to act as regional or at-large delegates with the authority to initiate new at-large members of the GDC, and/or collect dues and assessments.

**B.** Regional delegates must be members in good standing of the GDC.

**C.** Regional delegates of the IWW may also serve as delegates for the GDC upon requesting Delegate Credentials from the CST.

**D.** Each regional delegate will be responsible to the GDC for all funds and supplies, including initiation fees, dues and assessments and will pass on such information along with all funds received to GDC Central Administration in a quarterly report.

## **Article II**

### **Section 1 Membership**

**A.** Any member of the IWW in good standing may be a member of the GDC.

**B.** Non-members of the IWW, and those ineligible for membership in the IWW may still join the GDC, as long as they subscribe to the general principles and aims of the IWW and GDC.

**C.** All members shall agree to abide by the regulations of the GDC and the Constitution and regulations of the IWW; to study the principles contained therein; and make themselves acquainted with its purpose.

**D.** No expelled member of the IWW shall be eligible for membership in the GDC.

## **Article III**

### **Section 1 Goals**

**A.** The GDC of the IWW wants most to provide support to any member of the working class who finds themselves in legal trouble due to their involvement in the class war.

**B.** Any member of the IWW or GDC in good standing may petition the GDC for direct aid in their legal defense on charges resulting from protests, picketing, or other acts related to job actions or activist causes. This aid may include bail, bond or legal aid, and may take the form of a grant or a no-interest loan. Members may also rest assured of solidarity from the organization, including motions of support, letter writing, and public education as to the case (or cases) in question.

**C.** Non-members of the IWW and GDC who find themselves embattled with the law may also expect solidarity from the organization, including motions of support, letter writing, and public education as to the case (or cases) in question.

**D.** GDC Locals and Regional Locals will always try to engage in strike support and other activities consistent with the aims and principles of the IWW.

**E.** The GDC is also available to aid our organizers facing Unfair Labor Practices (ULPs) and other work-related legal issues.

## **Article IV**

### **Section 1 General Officers**

**A.** The officers of the GDC shall consist of the Central Secretary-Treasurer (CST) and General Defense Steering Committee.

### **Section 2 Duties of the Central Secretary-Treasurer**

**A.** The CST of the GDC shall be to take charge of all books, papers and effects of the GDC, shall conduct the correspondence pertaining to his/her office, is the custodian of the seal of the organization, and will act as a Clearing House for stamps, cards and other educational supplies.

**B.** The CST is responsible for the financial accounting of all funds of the GDC, controlling the Defense Fund of the GDC, and all other expenses and special accounts. The CST is responsible for making a quarterly financial report available to the General Executive Board, the general membership of the IWW, and the membership of the GDC by submission to the IWW GOB.

**C.** The CST will make him/herself available each year to the IWW and the GDC during the Delegate Convention of the IWW, reporting on the state of the GDC and on its various projects. Any business or discussion of the processes, procedures or methods of the GDC may be handled by the Delegate Convention at this time.

**D.** The term of office shall be for 1 year and shall commence on January 1.

**E.** The CST will remit any and all financial and communication records upon request by any member of the GDC Steering Committee or any member of the GEB or the GST of the IWW.

### **Section 3 Election of the Central Secretary-Treasurer**

**A.** Nominees for the office of the CST shall each be a member of the IWW, in good standing for two years, and a member of the GDC for at least one year prior to nomination.

**B.** In the event that no nominee for CST meets these requirements, then they shall be reduced to 1 year membership in the IWW, and 6 months membership in the GDC.

**C.** Nominations for the office of CST will be made at the Delegate Convention of the IWW. Nominations may also be by mail or email, with nominations closed by the final adjournment of General Convention. The election shall be by general referendum of the membership of the IWW.

**D.** Any person elected to the CST's office must remain in good standing with both the IWW and the GDC while holding office.

**E.** No candidate for the CST will be permitted to run or hold other office within the General Administration at the same time, unless no other qualified candidates are available.

**F.** No candidate is eligible for more than three terms in succession. Members who have served three or more consecutive terms as CST shall only have their names placed on the ballot, in the event that two qualified nominees cannot otherwise be secured.

**G.** If the post of Central Secretary-Treasurer becomes vacant, the GDC Steering Committee shall have the power to appoint a Central Secretary-Treasurer of the General Defense Committee, to serve until the membership of the IWW elects a new CST via referendum. This appointment shall become effective immediately, but shall be reviewed by the GEB. The GEB shall have the final authority over who the replacement CST shall be.

**H.** The Steering Committee shall remove a CST by majority vote should s/he fail to fulfill the duties of the CST.

#### **Section 4 Duties of the Steering Committee**

**A.** The General Defense Steering Committee will be made up of three members elected by GDC referendum, the CST, and the Chair of the General Executive Board.

**B.** The Steering Committee shall have general supervision of all affairs of the GDC and shall watch vigilantly over the interests throughout its jurisdiction.

**C.** The Steering Committee shall consider petitions of those requesting aid from the GDC, and have the full power to provide whatever help is available up to and including 30% of non-earmarked funds from the Defense Fund of the GDC. Funds greater than 30% shall be approved by GEB vote.

**D.** The Steering Committee will have general oversight over all GDC publications and guide their policy.



**E.** Elected Representatives to the Steering Committee shall each serve a term of office of 1 year, which shall commence on January 1.

**F.** Each elected Representative to the Steering Committee is eligible for a maximum of five terms in succession. Members who have served five or more consecutive terms shall only have their names appear on the ballot in the event that three other qualified nominees cannot otherwise be secured.

**G.** In the absence of elected members of the Steering Committee, the remaining participants, the CST, the GST of the IWW, and the Chair of the General Executive Board, may make any and all decisions on the Committee's behalf.

## **Section 5 Election of the Steering Committee**

**A.** Nominees for the Steering Committee shall each be a member of the IWW in good standing, and a member of the GDC in good standing.

**B.** Members of the GDC who are not eligible for membership in the IWW may be nominated to serve on the Steering Committee, but must have maintained membership in good standing for at least 2 years prior to nomination.

**C.** In the event that no nominee meets these requirements, then they shall be reduced to membership in the GDC at the time of nomination.

**D.** Nominations for the Steering Committee must be made to the Central Secretary-Treasurer no later than 11:59pm EST on Labor Day. The Central Secretary-Treasurer and Steering Committee will contact nominees regarding their acceptance before reviewing eligibility. A list of eligible nominees will be released with all proposed referendum resolutions via direct mailing to each GDC member in good standing. The referendum ballot shall include space for write-in candidates. All write-in candidates who meet the requirements of Section 5 A or B are considered qualified nominees. All write-in candidates shall be considered qualified nominees under Section 5 C provided two (2) or less candidates do not meet the requirements under Section 5 A or B.

**E.** Any person elected to the Steering Committee must remain in good standing with the GDC while holding office.

**F.** No elected member of the Steering Committee will be permitted to run for or hold other office within the General Administration at the same time.

**G.** In the event of a vacancy on the Steering Committee, with all duly elected members or alternates already serving or being unavailable, the Central Secretary-Treasurer and the GEB Chairperson shall appoint a new committee member until another shall be elected by referendum.

## **Section 6 Charges Against Officers**

**A.** Charges against any Officers of the GDC should be filed in writing with the GEB or the Delegate Convention, following the protocols laid out for charges in the Constitution of the IWW.

## **Article V**

### **Section 1 Funds**

**A.** Two funds will be maintained by GDC Central. The General Fund will be maintained as the operating fund for the GDC, for the purpose of expenses, printing, and other supplies related to the operation of GDC Central. The Defense Fund of the GDC shall be accounted for separately and distributed for the purpose of legal defense work.

**B.** The Steering Committee is empowered to create new funds as it sees fit.

**C.** Any member of the IWW or GDC in good standing may petition the GDC Steering Committee for direct aid in their legal defense from the Defense Fund. This aid may take the form of bail, bond or legal aid, and may take the form of a grant or a no-interest loan. The CST and loan recipient shall write and sign a reasonable and fair repayment plan.

**D.** Such funds may normally only be drawn out of the Defense Fund by the Steering Committee, after a proper petition, motion and majority vote in favor.

**E.** In the interest of fulfilling one of the GDC's goals of strengthening solidarity with all prisoners of the class war, the CST is permitted to issue checks for "Gifts of Solidarity" to other Defense efforts that are brought to the attention of the GDC. Such gifts may not exceed \$25 each per recipient per year, and the total of all gifts in a calendar year may not exceed \$500, or 4% of the Defense Fund, whichever is greater. Such gifts may only be issued to Defense Funds or to incarcerated individuals who are members of the General Defense Committee or IWW. These gifts can also be given to prisoners as commissary gifts.

**F.** The membership of the GDC may requisition up to 50% of the funds from the Defense Fund for any given initiative by means of a referendum of the entire GDC membership. Said referendum may be called by a signed petition of 15 members of the GDC in good standing for at least one month prior to the month the petition is initiated or by a chartered local making an official petition by majority vote and balloting to be conducted by the office of the CST.

**G.** GDC Locals and Regional Locals may raise funds through assessments and other fundraising techniques to aid in the defense of class war prisoners outside the IWW and GDC. These funds will be a separate trust by the chartered local or international group.

Delegates-at-large are required to submit all dues and assessments with their quarterly delegate report.

**H.** Donations sent to the GDC on behalf of class war prisoners, will always be so earmarked and always be passed on in a timely fashion to the defense account of the prisoner. Donations that remain unclaimed after 2 years will be allocated to the Defense Fund by the CST.

**I.** The General Fund is not to exceed \$25,000. Funds exceeding \$25,000 in the General Fund shall be transferred to the Defense Fund.

## **Section 2 Budget and Fiscal Year**

**A.** At the start of each IWW fiscal year the Steering Committee and GEB Chair will discuss, create, and finalize a budget for the GDC.

**B.** The GDC Central budget must be completed and approved by the Steering Committee no later than 15 days after the start of the IWW Fiscal Year.

**C.** The GDC's fiscal report shall coincide with that of the IWW. Currently, each fiscal year starts July 1st and ends June 31st.

**D.** The IWW Audit Committee has the authority to audit the books of the GDC.

## **Section 3 Dues**

**A.** Initiation fees for GDC membership are \$5.00, all of which goes in the GDC General Fund, and dues shall be a sliding scale starting at no less than \$5.00 per quarter. It is strongly recommended that one quarter of GDC dues be the same as one month of the members' IWW dues. It is the policy of the GDC to put no financial barrier to prevent any worker from joining. Accordingly, initiation shall not exceed \$5.00 nor quarterly dues exceed \$27.00.

**B.** Each local shall retain 50% of dues collected and pass the remaining 25% to the Defense Fund and 25% to the General Fund.

**C.** At-large members, who are not part of a local, shall pay all their dues directly to the CST, or an at-large or regional delegate. Of these dues, 50% shall be deposited in the Defense Fund; the remaining 50% may be deposited in the General Fund.

**D.** Dues are paid on a quarterly basis. A dues payment covers an entire quarter regardless of the day on which it was paid. A member who has not paid dues for the one (1) quarter period prior to the current quarter is considered in bad standing and is not entitled to any rights or benefits in the GDC until they have been paid. A local may vote to allow a member in bad standing to participate in local business meetings with voice, but no vote. After two (2) quarters in bad standing, a three (3) quarter period of

unpaid dues prior to the current quarter, members are considered to be on inactive standing and cannot take part in business meetings.

**E.** Members in inactive standing may reinitiate their membership by paying an initiation fee along with one quarter's dues upon reinitiating or by paying, in full, any back dues at the current dues rate. Any person reinitiating their membership shall be assigned the same membership number in which they were originally assigned upon their first initiation. If a replacement card is needed upon reinitiating, the Local or GDC Central shall issue the replacement at no additional charge.

## **Article VI**

### **Section 1 Clearing House**

**A.** The CST and Steering Committee will maintain contact with each local of the GDC, and the CST will function as a Clearing House for all supplies and materials necessary to conduct the business of the GDC.

**B.** The Secretary-Treasurer of each GDC Local or International Local will maintain contact with the Clearing House through the CST, and shall record all fees, dues, and assessments collected on forms by their local's delegate(s) provided by the Clearing House and return these along with all fees and dues money set aside for the General and Defense funds to the CST Quarterly.

**C.** All regional delegates, delegates-at-large and others bearing such credentials shall record all fees, dues, and assessments collected on forms provided by the Clearing House, and must return these along with all fees and dues money allocated for the GDC funds to the CST.

### **Section 2 Clearing House and Reporting Deadlines**

**A.** The due dates for all reporting to GDC Central each quarter are hereby the 1st of January, April, July, and October of each year. This shall remain effective for all delegates, Locals, Secretary-Treasurers, International Group locals and delegates-at-large.

## **Article VII**

### **Section 1 Materials**

**A.** There shall be a standard label for the GDC. It shall be of a crimson color and always the same in design. The use of the label shall only be vested in our organization. The Steering Committee and CST shall take any necessary steps to protect the label of the GDC.

**B.** All branches of the GDC should procure and use such supplies as dues books, dues stamps, official buttons, labels and badges from GDC Central. All such supplies are to be of a uniform design. Regional Locals may print their own materials, dues books, dues stamps, official buttons, labels and badges, in their own language, if they desire. The design and format of these materials should remain generally consistent with those produced by the Central Administration, and copies of these materials must be forwarded on to the CST.

**C.** Assessments may be produced by the local and regional locals distributing them in various denominations. Likewise, assessments may be produced by GDC Central of various denominations and types for various fundraising purposes. A copy, digital or otherwise, of any stamps issued by an International Group must be sent to GDC Central.

## **Section 2 Referendums**

**A.** A general referendum on any organization question, including constitutional amendments, may be initiated by the General Steering Committee of the GDC, by a chartered local, by a petition of 20 GDC members in good standing or by the GEB or the General Convention of the IWW.

**B.** All referendum items shall be submitted no later than 11:59pm EST on Labor Day and shall be included on a ballot to be issued no more than 60 days after the end of the IWW Delegate Convention. Notification of all referendum items, including the full text of all questions to be voted upon and names of all nominees for the Steering Committee who are eligible and have not declined, will be provided to all members via mailing not less than 30 days before ballots are mailed. Ballots shall be sent to all members in good standing and shall be open for voting for 31 days. Ballots shall be sent by mail to all members. The deadline for receipt of ballots at GDC Central shall be printed on the ballot. Votes shall be counted and the results released no later than 32 days after ballots were mailed to the membership.

**C.** Bylaws, as well as future amendments and revisions of the Bylaws, must be approved by the GDC membership through referendum.

**D.** All changes ratified by a general referendum ballot shall take effect January 1, unless otherwise noted in the measure.

**E.** The Steering Committee may approve the formation of regional ballot committees elected by a GDC local to issue, receive, count and report the results of the ballots to the CST in accordance with the referendum timeline and requirements as set out by the bylaws and Steering Committee. The ballot committee shall send all ballots to the CST upon completion of its duties.

### **Section 3 Emergency Referendum**

**A.** An emergency referendum may be initiated at any time by a signed petition of 15% of the membership or 20 members, whichever is greater, all of whom are to have been in good standing for more than one quarter. This referendum will follow the proper emergency referendum procedure.

**B.** Upon receipt of a completed Emergency Referendum petition, the CST and Steering Committee shall, over the [gdc-list@lists.iww.org](mailto:gdc-list@lists.iww.org), announce the receipt of the emergency referendum petition. It will also be announced in the next GOB after receipt. After a period of 60 days to allow for discussion on [gdc-list@lists.iww.org](mailto:gdc-list@lists.iww.org) and in the GOB, the CST shall send ballots to all GDC members in good standing for voting following the rules laid out in Article VII, Section 2b.

**C.** Petitions must be signed with the member's full name and membership number and may be submitted electronically to [gdc@iww.org](mailto:gdc@iww.org), submitted to a GDC Central member, or delivered by mail to the address at the end of this document.

**D.** The CST will verify the eligibility and membership of each petitioner and announce the legitimacy of the petition no later than 72 hours after receiving the petition.

For more information about the General Defense Committee, contact:

Central Secretary-Treasurer

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