

By-Laws

Secular Democrats of Texas

Article I General Provisions

Section 1. Introduction

- a. This organization shall be known as the Secular Democrats of Texas, also commonly referred to as the Secular Caucus at the Texas Democratic Party convention.

Section 2. Purpose

- a. The purpose of the Secular Democrats is to work within the Texas Democratic Party, contributing a robust voice and representation within the party structure; increasing the visibility and respect for non-theistic viewpoints; and protecting the religiously neutral character of government by encouraging Texas Democrats to adopt secular policy.
- b. The Secular Democrats will present issues and act as an advocate for non-theistic persons within the Texas Democratic Party.
- c. The purpose of this organization shall be to help elect Democratic candidates by providing a centralized repository of expertise and a clearinghouse for all secular campaign activities. This will be accomplished by working with the various Democratic campaigns by organizing secular persons in Texas to promote the values of service, competence, and honor in support of the Party and its candidates. In addition, the Secular Democrats will encourage participation of secular persons in the Party, encourage, educate, and finance secular persons who aspire to public office, and raise awareness of secular issues in the State and the Party.
- d. In promoting its purposes, the Secular Democrats will use meetings, websites and other media of publicity and communication to increase knowledge of all matters pertaining to the organization and encourage cooperation among secular persons in the Party.
- e. Endorse, raise funds, and contribute to general campaigns of pro-equality candidates for federal, state, and local offices for the State of Texas.

Section 3. Authority

- a. These by-laws shall govern the Secular Democrats and shall continue in effect subject to amendment as provided below.

Section 4. By-Laws of the Texas Democratic Party

- a. Any issues not specifically covered by these by-laws shall be governed by the bylaws of the Texas Democratic Party (TDP). In case of conflict in the by-laws, the bylaws of the TDP will be the governing document. The Secular Caucus specifically recognizes its obligations to adhere to the General Provisions of the by-laws of the TDP.

Article II Membership

Section 1. Eligibility

- a. The Secular Democrats shall be composed of “active members,” defined as any Democrat currently registered to vote in Texas who believes in and supports the Purpose of the Secular Caucus, who has returned a membership form and paid dues. The Secular Caucus shall permit the use of secret ballots.

Section 2. Voting Powers

- a. Voting privileges for active members, as defined in Article II, Section 1, shall go into effect 60 days after member initiation, which begins once initial form and payment have been provided to the current Secular Democrats of Texas Treasurer.

Section 3. Dues

- a. All Secular Democrat funds shall be promptly accounted for and processed according to the rules promulgated by the State Finance Committee of the TDP.
- b. The fiscal year shall begin on July 1 and end on June 30 of the following calendar year.
- c. Membership dues shall be payable biannually by April 30 of each even numbered year to cover membership for the next July 1 to June 30 biannual period. The amount of dues for the biannual period shall be the same as for the prior period, unless a change is made by vote of the Board prior to the notification date specified above.

- d. The Treasurer and the Chair, jointly, shall provide notice of the amount of dues and the due date to current and identified potential members by March 31 of each even numbered year.
- e. If subsequent period dues are not paid by the beginning of the applicable fiscal year, the member shall be considered “inactive” for the new period and may be restored to active membership only upon payment of a full period’s dues. If the deadline for payment of dues is not met, the Chair may rule that the inactive member shall not be allowed to vote for executive officers.
- f. In case of economic hardship, dues may be waived upon application to the Treasurer and approval of the Chair.
- g. Membership may be cancelled during a biannual membership period, but dues shall not be refunded except in cases of hardship and upon application to the Treasurer and approval of the Chair. However, when membership is cancelled upon the member’s request, the member may not cast any further votes until membership is reinstated with payment of the appropriate membership dues, as described above.

Article III
Executive Board and Officers

Section 1. Organization

- a. This Secular Democrats of Texas is constituted in accordance with the by-laws of the State Committee of the TDP.

Section 2. Executive Board

- a. Membership of the Executive Board (Board) of the Secular Democrats shall be composed of the Chair and the other officers duly elected by the voting membership.
- b. The Board shall govern the affairs of the Secular Democrats. The Board shall have the authority to make policy for the Secular Democrats and to oversee managerial matters.
- c. Other duties of the Board shall be to exercise all executive powers on behalf of the Secular Democrats between meetings. The Board shall inform the members of the Secular Democrats of all decisions and recommendations made by the Board. Such information shall be made at the next regular meeting.
- d. Quorum of any meeting of the Board shall consist of 3 members.

Section 3. Officers

- a. The officers of the Secular Democrats and the Board shall consist of the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Secretary, and the Treasurer. The duties and powers of the officers shall be as follows.
- b. The Chair shall preside over all general meetings of the Secular Democrats and represent the organization on the Executive Board of the Democratic State Committee. The Chair shall provide required documentation to the Rules Committee of the TDP including a membership list and a copy of the current bylaws. The Chair shall also administer and coordinate the activities of the Secular Democrats according to the Bylaws; represent the Secular Democrats as the principal spokesperson; appoint all ad hoc committees, subject to approval of the Board; authorize all disbursements of funds, and serve as ex-officio member of all committees.
- c. The Vice-Chair shall assume the responsibility of the Chair if the Chair is absent for regularly scheduled meetings or other function that requires Chair's attendance or upon the occasion of a vacancy in the position of Chair.
- d. The Secretary shall record and publish the minutes of all meetings; provide materials and assist in publication of newsletters, press releases, and other communications; and conduct correspondence for the Secular Democrats as requested by the Chair and/or the Board.
- e. The Treasurer shall promptly account for all funds, prepare financial reports as required by the Democratic State Committee. The Treasurer is responsible to maintain the list of voting members at meetings and prepare an annual budget for approval by the Board. The Treasurer shall prepare a notice of dues to all current members as specified in Article II, Section 3.

Section 4. Committees

- a. There are no standing committees of the Secular Democrats. Special and Ad Hoc Committees may be established as necessary by the Chair who shall appoint the chair(s) of such committees, after consulting with the other members of the Board.

Section 5. Terms of Office

- a. The officers shall serve a term of approximately two years until duly replaced according to these Bylaws and Standing Rules.
- b. Terms of office of members of the Board shall begin immediately following their election.

Section 6. Officer Removal Clause

- a. Any officer of the Secular Democrats of Texas may be removed prior to the expiration of term for malfeasance, misfeasance and nonfeasance provided that the due process rights of any officer sought to be removed shall be observed.

Section 7. Elections

- a. Each officer's term of office shall begin immediately upon election and shall end when replaced by a person duly elected to the office.
- b. The election of officers shall occur at the first meeting of the Secular Democrats on or after July 1 of even-numbered years. The meeting may either be in person or by electronic means such as telephone conference call or email.
- c. Notice of the election shall be communicated to members and to other interested parties at the discretion of the Chair at least 20 calendar days prior to the meeting. Members wishing to serve on the Board shall complete a filing form to be submitted to the outgoing Board and the TDP. The filing form shall be attached to the notice of election or shall be posted on the Secular Democrats of Texas website, and the notice of election shall communicate the due date for the filing form.
- d. Rules for the election shall be distributed to the membership at least one week prior to the election, in accordance with the State Party Plan. Only individual active members of the caucus shall have the right to vote. All members in attendance may vote for officers with the exception specified in Article II, Section 2.
- e. The Board may develop Standing Rules pertaining to elections and other matters as indicated in Article VI.

Article IV
Meetings

Section 1. Attendance

- a. All meetings of the Secular Democrats and its Board shall be open to the public with the exception of executive sessions as noted below.

Section 2. Regular Meetings

- a. The general body shall meet at least two times per year.

- b. Meetings shall be called by the Chair with written, electronic or telephone notice provided at least 10 days prior to the meeting.

Section 3. Special Meetings

- a. The Chair may call Special Meetings of the full general body on at least 10 days notice. The notice shall be posted on the Secular Democrats website and communicated by mail, telephone, or electronic means to its membership.
- b. No business may be transacted at a Special Meeting that is not specified in the call to the meeting.

Section 4. Board Meetings

- a. The Board shall hold at least three meetings each year.
- b. Upon adequate explanation of the reason for inability to attend a Board meeting in person, a member of the Board may attend via speakerphone or other real-time electronic means.
- c. A member of the Board who attends via electronic means as specified in Section 4.b may vote on motions, provided the conditions specified in the Standing Rules are observed.
- d. Unless otherwise limited in these Bylaws, the Board may, subject to the provisions of any Standing Rules, take specific votes and conduct business via face to face meeting, conference call, electronic mail, or other means. The Secretary shall record the result of any non-face to face vote in the minutes of the next subsequent meeting of the body, with the date and means of voting indicated. Where technologically feasible, the Secretary shall retain copies of the electronic communication(s) for filing with the minutes in which the vote results are recorded.
- e. In the case of egregious violation of rules of the Party Plan and provisions of these Bylaws, the Board may enter closed executive session to consider censure or removal of any Member of the Board, any committee chair, any member, or Congressional District Representative. When the subject of the executive session is a member of the Board, that member may not vote on the decision.
- f. The Board may also enter closed executive session to consider competing bids from vendors.

Section 5. Quorum

- a. The quorum for General and Special Meetings of the Secular Democrats, including election of officers, shall be five percent.
 - i. Such quorum shall include members who have provided proxies accepted by the Chair.
- b. The required quorum for meetings of the Board shall be 50 percent.
 - i. Such a quorum shall include members participating by electronic means.

Section 6. Proxies

- a. Proxies shall be accepted for all votes taken by the full general body or its Board under the conditions described in the Standing Rules, unless otherwise prohibited in these Bylaws or Standing Rules.
- b. The Chair of any meeting shall have the authority to rule on the acceptability of any proxy submitted for that meeting.

Article V
Dissolution

Section 1. Dissolution

- a. Upon dissolution of this organization, all of its assets remaining after payment of all outstanding obligations and collection of debts owed to the organization shall be distributed to the TDP.

Article VI
Standing Rules and By-laws Amendments

Section 1. Standing Rules

- a. The Board may maintain Standing Rules to detail procedures and authorities established generally in these Bylaws. Such Standing Rules shall be adopted and amended by vote of the Board.
- b. Such Standing Rules shall be made available to any member upon request.

Section 2. By-law Amendments

- a. Proposed amendments to these by-laws must be in writing and must be mailed to all current voting members of the Secular Democrats at least two weeks before any vote can be taken on such amendments. Those members who have email may receive their copy via email.
- b. Amendments to these by-laws including those necessary to conform to Democratic State Committee rules must be approved by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of those voting members who are voting on such proposed amendments. Voting will occur at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Secular Democrats.

Article VII
General Policies

Section 1. Non-discrimination

- a. The Secular Democrats of Texas is prohibited from discrimination on the grounds of race, color, creed, national origin, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities as defined by the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, or economic status.

Section 2. Effective Date

- a. These Bylaws will become effective March 2018, by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the paid members present at a meeting called for this purpose and have since been amended.