

# COORDINATORS' CORNER: WHY WE MUST PRESERVE THE 75% BOYCOTT THRESHOLD

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## COORDINATORS' CORNER

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*By The General Coordinator Team*

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In the Jan. 7, 2025, issue of the *Gazette*, we outlined several significant risks posed if the Coop were to boycott Israeli goods. Today, we turn our attention to a critical concern: a proposed repeal of the 75% supermajority requirement for General Meeting votes on boycotts. Advocates for the Israeli boycott are seeking to reduce this threshold to a simple majority, creating an easier path to approving a boycott of Israeli goods.

We understand that members who favor these changes value the Coop and are act-

ing on their beliefs in alignment with their political values. Members who have expressed a desire for a boycott may not intend to divide the Coop, but their proposals threaten to do just that—alienating members, destabilizing finances and detracting from our core mission of providing affordable, high-quality food to working members. While we respect their right to raise these issues, we must acknowledge the risks their proposals pose to the broader Coop community.

## **Upholding Cooperative Principles**

The 75% threshold is not arbitrary—it is rooted in the International Cooperative Alliance’s 7 Cooperative Principles, which promote unity while embracing diversity. Decisions such as a boycott, which have far-reaching implications, should reflect a broad consensus rather than a slim majority. By preserving the 75% threshold, we ensure that boycotts genuinely represent the collective will of the membership and align with the Coop’s core values, as demonstrated by our 50-year legacy of inclusivity, shared labor and cooperation.

## **The Risks of Reducing the Boycott Threshold**

Since 1973, boycotts at the Coop have historically received overwhelming support, often near 100%, with none below 80%. This support has been essential to maintaining the cohesion and sustainability of the Coop. Lowering the threshold would undermine this tradition and could result in:

- Divisiveness and distrust among members
- Member departures
- Fewer new members joining
- Financial instability
- Higher prices
- Staff layoffs

For more info on these risks, see our previous Coordinators' Corner here.

## **Simple Majorities, Super Majorities and Coop Democracy**

A simple majority vote for boycotts risks allowing the views of a narrow majority to override the concerns of a substantial minority, eroding the sense of belonging and mutual respect that defines our Coop. Divisive boycotts will alienate many members, causing thousands to feel unrepresented or unwelcome, potentially leading to significant departures.

In addition, requiring a 75% supermajority to approve a boycott is not anti-democratic; democracies often use supermajorities when unity, inclusivity and long-term stability are prioritized, particularly in situations where divisive outcomes could jeopardize the integrity of the institution. By requiring broader consensus for boycotts, the Coop avoids division, polarization and instability, safeguarding its core principles and sustainability, while a simple majority risks alienating members and weakening the community.

## **The Role of Politics at the Coop**

Our shared labor and cooperative culture reflect the Coop's approach to political stances. While broader political considerations and boycotts are a part of the Coop's history, moving forward with a boycott without near unanimous support threatens to erode what unites us: the shared efforts of running a successful, welcoming and sustainable cooperative. By retaining a high threshold for boycotts, we prioritize the principles that bring us together.

## **Protecting the Coop's Future**

The Coop's success is built on its shared labor model and ability to serve a diverse community. Lowering the 75% boycott threshold to a simple majority undermines our Coop.

We urge all members to act to protect our Coop:

- Attend General Meetings to voice your concerns.
- Vote against lowering the boycott threshold and related governance changes.
- Engage in respectful dialogue with fellow members about these issues.
- Write to the *Gazette* to share your perspective.