

MEMBER-SUBMITTED ARTICLE: RESTORING SIMPLE MAJORITY FOR BOYCOTTS

May 5, 2026



Illustration by Olexa Hewryk

May 5, 2026

By John Caramichael and Abdi-Hakin Dirie

We are now approaching a long-delayed vote on our proposal to restore simple majority voting (50%+1) for boycotts.

Currently, boycotts require a 75% supermajority to pass, making them the only Coop decision with special rules. All other decisions, including financial investments, are decided by simple majority. This includes past votes to spend millions to buy our building and contentious decisions on stocking meat and beer and opening a second location. (Note: Bylaws amendments require a 2/3 supermajority, but virtually all deci-

sions on Coop operations, including boycotts, do not amend the bylaws).

From 1973 to 2016, boycotts were also decided by simple majority, including those targeting apartheid South Africa and Chile under Pinochet. The idea of a supermajority requirement only emerged in 2009, just two months after Israel bombed Gaza, killing 1,417 Palestinians, including 313 children. Calls to boycott Israel prompted some members to push for a higher threshold, effectively moving the goalposts.

Further discussion in 2010, 2013 and 2015 brought more attention to the supermajority proposal. Members at the time commented that the policy was “an attempt to rig future votes” and likened it to Republican voter fraud laws meant to influence elections.

The 75% rule was eventually adopted in 2016 through a procedurally flawed vote. (Ironically, it only passed with 60% support and can be repealed by simple majority). The proposal was brought to the floor by a member who is a well-documented supporter of Israel in the *Gazette*, most recently calling for our Coop to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, which falsely conflates criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Like gerrymandering, the 75% threshold erodes democracy by giving disproportionate power to members opposing boycotts. While not explicitly naming Israel, the policy reflects a broader “Palestine Exception,” where advocacy for Palestinians faces institutional barriers.

In our Coop, the Palestine Exception threatens other solidarity work by making all boycotts much harder to pass. In 2017, 59% of members voted to boycott Tom Cat Bakery in Queens, in solidarity with workers seeking severance and basic protections from ICE. Despite majority support, the boycott failed under the 75% rule. The workers ultimately lost their fight, and our Coop shares responsibility.

In our time of rising fascism, war, genocide and exploitation, boycotts remain an essential tool of nonviolent resistance. Restoring simple majority voting will renew our

tradition of solidarity by removing a recently established barrier.

To address two common criticisms: First, some argue boycotts are “divisive” and require special rules. But our Coop has made many big decisions using simple majority. Disagreement is part of democracy. Manipulating the rules to advantage one side does not reduce disagreement; it merely undermines faith in the process. As seen with last year’s vote on hybrid General Meetings (in that case, needlessly requiring a bylaws amendment), applying special rules to block a popular policy created greater frustration.

Second, some claim supermajority reflects Coop “tradition,” referring to our past voting record on boycotts. It is true that past boycott votes often had high percentage levels of support, but the actual requirement was a simple majority until 2016.

Consider an analogy: the Coop’s city council district votes overwhelmingly blue each cycle. Should we require Democrats to win 75% to be elected because of that “tradition”? Such a rule would clearly be unfair. High percentage votes are welcome, but requiring a supermajority is different, because it grants unequal power to opponents of boycotts and distorts the democratic process.

More broadly, these criticisms omit how and why the rule was introduced: in reaction to a proposed boycott of Israel. The seemingly neutral rhetoric belies the reality of a Palestine Exception.

Restoring simple majority voting is a step toward a more democratic and accessible Coop, in the spirit of reforms like hybrid meetings. Thank you for your consideration, and we hope to earn your “yes” vote at an upcoming General Meeting.