

Approved Platform of the Benton County Democratic Party

01 - Preamble

We are proud of our Democratic Party, its heritage and accomplishments. No part of our heritage is cherished more than our belief in the rights and worth of each individual. This belief commits us to promote and safeguard a quality of life that recognizes and benefits human dignity and fosters opportunity to share for all. We must build upon traditional Democratic Party values such as health care for all, the preservation of middle-income jobs and wages, childcare, public transportation, public education, tax fairness, and the common good. We will not tolerate the undermining of our privacy and most basic civil liberties, the shrinking of our wages and pensions, skyrocketing drug prices, unabated pollution of our air and water, and corporate corruption. We reaffirm that the Democratic Party is the party of the common person and stands strongly for civil rights, decent and affordable housing, and a fiscally sound social security system. We are not timid in the direction our party takes; our position on these issues is clear.

We believe in and will continue to work for truly representative government, responsive to all Americans rather than special interests. We advocate a government that is compassionate, progressive, responsible and fair. We continue to promote liberty, justice, security, equality, and individual freedom for every citizen.

We are dedicated to achieving peace, prosperity and a national outlook of hope and opportunity. And we recognize with this outlook that young people are our future. We welcome young people to join our party and foster their growth within it.

We ask that all Democrats rally behind our candidates.

We must return the focus of the Democratic Party to supporting working people, and work to reduce the Party's focus on fringe groups and extremist movements.

The Democratic Party needs to recapture the meaning of the word "liberal" so that it may be taken to stand for the original liberal values such as kindness, freedom, hopefulness, and faith in a positive future.

02 - Agriculture

1. Agricultural policy should support family farming. The food supply should not be completely controlled by giant agribusiness in the name of economies of scale and raw profit.

03 - Economic Development, Corporate Power and Media Reform

1. We oppose U.S. Headquartered national and multi-national corporations receiving tax breaks for out-sourcing U.S. jobs to foreign countries.
2. We oppose U.S. Headquartered national and multi-national corporations not paying their fair share of U.S. taxes by using foreign tax havens.
3. We oppose management and ownership by foreign companies of our ports and other infrastructure and assets which are crucial to our safety and security.
4. We support laws that require credit cards to comply with Washington state usury laws. And we support new and revised regulations and laws, including federal laws, that require lending institutions comply with Washington State lending laws.

5. We support a program of infrastructure renewal and development, to take the country into the 21st century in a manner befitting the great country the US aspires to be. This means developing transportation including marine and aviation infrastructure, mass transit, power generation and transmission, and telecommunication infrastructure. These are investments in the future, not workfare projects.
6. We support the 35% limit of media ownership in major markets.
7. We call for steps at the federal level that will reverse the trend to ever-escalation payments including salaries of corporate officers at the expenses of workers, stock holders, and consumers.
8. We support the return of the windfalls profits tax.
9. We support the repeal of de-regulation effort implemented under the previous and current federal administrations and re-establishment of the laws that regulate investment practices of investment practices, savings and loans, and insurance companies.

04 - Education

1. We support fully funded public education to provide up-to-date textbooks and materials, uncrowded and safe facilities, and optimum student-teacher ratios.
2. We support continued federal funding of Head Start.
3. We support state funding for the repair and maintenance of public schools and infrastructure, and for equipment and technology in compliance with the Americans-With-Disabilities Act in schools.
4. We affirm the value of AMERICORPS, VISTA, Peace Corps, and Job Corps and support their funding.
5. We believe the 'No-Child-Left-Behind Act' should be improved, corrected, and then fully funded. We oppose the use of testing alone to measure the effectiveness of any given school.
6. We oppose voucher and charter school proposals except those that are developed in partnership with Washington public schools.
7. We support increased State and Federal funding for higher education, including increased financial aid, broadening eligibility for low interest and stable financial aid for college students, and ensuring more affordable tuition.
8. We oppose teaching creationism, intelligent design, mysticism and other non-science belief systems in Washington State Public School science classes.
9. We support the removal of the WASL exam as a requirement of high school graduation.
10. We support the extension of free public education to 2 years post-high school.
11. We support increased funding for vocational education and training.
12. We recognize that current educational research suggest that smaller “schools within schools” can target and help specific populations, and as such we support public education funding to expand pilot programs to support this endeavor eliminating the need for voucher and charter schools.

05 - Environment and Energy

1. We support following peer-reviewed science as the path forward in the development of long-term policies including water development and management, habitat preservation, and regional planning. We oppose the censorship of the reports of government scientists for political and ideological purposes.
2. We support a sound Salmon recovery policy that will provide greater certainty of water supplies for the future growth of the Tri-Cities communities and the Pacific Northwest and reflect the balanced considerations of all interested parties; i.e. the Native American tribes, sportsmen, river communities and water dependent industries.
3. We support the preservation of the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) and restoration of all national parks and refuges.
4. We support the sensible restrictions of commercial development including long-term planning. We support the restriction of harvesting of lumber and other natural resources to a sustainable level.
5. We support strengthening current laws to lower emission rates, increase enforcement of current standards, and further encourage the use of new technology to more effectively deal with air pollutants.
6. We believe the U.S. should participate in international treaties that address the problem of global warming such as the Kyoto Treaty. We believe Washington state should take this lead in implementing the spirit of Kyoto treaty and similar measures.
7. We support the Tri-Party Agreement and other efforts of Washington State to ensure that Hanford clean-up is completed and the Columbia River's water quality is protected from the Hanford Site's contamination.
8. We support the principle of preserving Columbia River water for the Pacific Northwest.
9. We support a policy whereby States are partners in decisions regarding offshore drilling and energy policy.
10. We support expeditious and coordinated funding of development of alternative energy sources and energy conservation as a way to decrease our dependency on oil. We strongly support an energy policy that significantly reduces our country's dependence on foreign oil and increases our reliance on clean, sustainable, and renewable energy sources, e.g., nuclear, wind and solar, to achieve a net-zero impact on the earth's climate.
11. We support holding energy-related corporations and their governmental oversight agencies accountable for maintaining environmental, safety, and health regulations and their enforcement.
12. We believe that the U.S. government should make every effort to steer bio-fuel sources away from food stocks, such as corn, and toward cellulose waste sources. This requires a commitment to a strong research and development effort.
13. We support keeping the BPA as a regional power system as originally intended, and oppose appropriation of BPA proceeds by the federal government. We support the BPA in maintaining affordable energy prices. .
14. We support setting goals for renewable energy in the portfolio of energy sources.
15. The Federal government should fulfill its obligation to repair the damage caused by Katrina in an environmentally responsible manner.
16. We support state and national action for the aggressive inspection and professional maintenance of all components of the public infrastructure including freshwater and wastewater systems, bridges, dams, communications systems, etc.
17. We support the preservation of the natural ridges and wetlands of the Tri-Cities area.

18. We support the repeal of the all subsidies to the oil and gas companies given the obscene multi-billion dollar profits by these companies.
19. We believe that Washington State should provide financial incentives for people wishing to use alternative energy source, such as solar panels or wind power.

06 - Foreign Policy

1. We support the continuing participation of the US in the United Nations as a means of reconciling international issues and dealing with global concerns. And we should pay our legitimate debt.
2. We support the UN efforts to secure just and peaceful solutions to conflicts. In particular, we support the involvement of the United Nations in efforts to restore peace in Iraq and to establish a representative government on a schedule dictated by the complex process involved and not by artificial deadlines set for political purposes.
3. We support efforts to protect the nation from terrorist attacks without suppressing basic human rights or allowing war to preempt diplomacy or peace and justice options.
4. We support and salute the men and women who have given life or limb because of terrorist action or the result of any foreign policy decisions the US has committed to pursue.
5. We support a policy that encourages US companies utilizing overseas labor to ensure that workers are paid a living wage as well as being protected by modern health and safety standards.
6. We support the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
7. We support the ratification of the following international treaties: the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. In addition we support the signing and ratification the Ottawa Convention on Land Mines. We support the signing and ratification of the Kyoto Protocol as updated to meet modern conditions.
8. We support humanitarian aid to needy populations.
9. We support fair trade agreements that include provisions to protect the environment and encourage sustainable agriculture and manufacturing and protect the democratic and economic rights of the work force.
10. We oppose military aid to repressive regimes regardless of past diplomatic relations with the United States.
11. We believe that our efforts should refocus on proven sources of international terrorism and on addressing the root causes of terrorism.
12. We support the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.
13. Understanding that nations often have to cooperate, we oppose a unilateralist approach to foreign policy.
14. We support and we expect our government to abide by the Geneva Convention.
15. We support efforts to exit Iraq as soon as reasonably possible, but in a responsible manner. We oppose permanent bases in Iraq.
16. We favor the lifting of US trade restrictions on Cuba.
17. We oppose any preemptive move toward war with any other sovereign nation.

07 - Government and Political Reform

1. We support the financing of political campaigns in a fair and equitable manner to insure representation of all factions including the voting public, so as to minimize the undue influence of powerful special interests.
2. We oppose the Patriot Act and its use that takes away rights of citizens and people everywhere. We support the freedoms embodied in the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights. We support rescinding the Patriot Act.
3. We strongly support the maintenance of balanced budgets
4. We oppose electronic balloting without a physical means of verification. We suggest verifiable voting systems at all levels, which assures that every vote is counted as intended. We support electronic voting if the ballot machine produces a paper ballot that the voter deposits in a secured ballot box at the voting precinct (premises) for certification purposes.
5. We support honest and open government. Government should be conducted honestly and fairly for the benefit of all the citizens, not just special interests. Special interests must be balanced fairly against the interests of the people.
6. We strongly support strengthening the wall of separation between church and State, and we strongly oppose taxpayer funding of religious institutions and "Faith-based" initiatives.
7. We support that only the US Congress shall have the authority to declare war and send troops into armed conflict. Congress will not give automatic blanket authority.
8. While we support full funding for the military, we oppose any reduction to, and support full funding for First Responders such as policemen, firemen, emergency medical responders, and so on...
9. At least a 5-year period shall pass before a U. S. President, Vice-President, Senator, Congressperson or cabinet member, once having left office, can become a lobbyist.
10. Federal and State mandates should always be fully funded; there should never be unfunded mandates.
11. We believe any war must be pay-as-you-go with provision for a military draft that includes all eligible citizens regardless of wealth or privilege.
12. We believe that the role of the government is to manage the commons for the national (and common) good, rather than dole out pieces of the commons to special interests as political favors.

08 - Healthcare

1. We support accessible, portable and affordable health care for ALL citizens regardless of age, employment status, or pre-existing conditions consistent with the United State's status as a first world country.
2. We support the preservation of the Medicare program. Although the new prescription medicine program appears to be well intentioned, it has flaws and we support development of a better program which is simpler and does not give windfalls to third-party interests.
3. We support both Washington State and the federal governments using their bulk purchasing power to directly negotiate with pharmaceutical companies for reduced drug prices particularly for seniors, people with disabilities and the underinsured.
4. We support the purchase of drugs from approved pharmaceutical sources inside the US with cost containment.
5. We support state and federal funding of programs to eliminate child, domestic, and senior abuse.
6. We support the testing of all cattle being sent for slaughter for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy[BSE] (mad cow disease) with results determining which meat is shipped for sale, and oppose the use of animal parts in livestock feed.

7. We oppose any efforts(s) to cut, reduce or otherwise limit Medicaid coverage in an attempt to balance the state budget.
8. We oppose the privatization of Social Security, Railroad Retirement, U. S. Postal Service Workers, and Medicare, et al, in any manner that reduces the viability of the programs as federally funded.
9. We support full funding of veterans' health care and hospitalization.
10. We support a simple majority to pass emergency medical service levies and fire service operating levies.
11. We support a strong public health program capable of dealing with pandemics and also with acts of bioterrorism.
12. We support a national healthcare program which has the maximum risk pool and which has maximum efficiency in administration. We do not support "cherry-picking" since medical health insurance is not the same as driver's insurance.
13. We support a national medical program which uses modern information technology to manage and share health records while honoring the privacy rights of patients.
14. We support efforts to find a fair balance between malpractice tort reform and preservation of patients' rights for compensation for acts of medical malpractice and/or negligence.
15. We support efforts to find a fair balance between healthcare as a public good and medicine as a private (for-profit) enterprise.
16. We oppose authorizing Washington state pharmacies to refuse the filling of prescriptions for medication prescribed by a licensed physician for personal or moral reasons.
17. We support efforts to modify laws to allow any person not covered to sign up for healthcare coverage available to their State legislators, Federal legislators, or Federal employees. We support efforts to subsidize the healthcare coverage for those who can not afford the insurance.
18. Physicians, not third-party payers, should determine the utilization of health care resources.

09 - Human Rights and Civil Rights

1. We affirm our opposition to all discrimination based on race, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.
2. We support the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1990.
3. We support policies enabling state and local governments to ensure equal opportunity for qualified women and minorities in employment, education and contracting.
4. We oppose any assault upon the civil rights of US citizens particularly under the guise of national security.
5. We support the concept of Affirmative Action policies to redress social inequities.
6. We support civil domestic partnership laws that protect the rights of every American such that:
 1. Partners have equal access to doctors and have visitation rights should either be hospitalized
 2. Partners can make medical decisions for each other in emergency situations
 3. Assets held in partnership can be protected should either partner become ill or die.Partners have access to employer insurance and retirement coverage.
7. We oppose unreasonable censorship and invasion of individual liberties.
8. We oppose the use of military tribunals to circumvent the constitutional rights of US citizens. We support the closing of the Guantanamo detention facility as a place in which such questionable legal processes occur for even non-citizens.

9. We oppose any restriction on a woman's right of reproductive choice. We affirm the right of reproductive freedom. We affirm that all decisions regarding reproductive medical care remain private medical matters between patients and their health care providers.
10. We support access to voluntary family planning, counseling, and information that discusses all options for reproductive choice.
11. We support US funding for voluntary international family planning.
12. We support state and federal funding for reproductive health services and for medically accurate sex education.
13. We oppose the use of torture under any circumstances by our government or at the behest of the US by others. We believe those who have sanctioned torture should be brought to justice.
14. We oppose the training of foreign military and police in the use of torture and terrorism by US government institutions such as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and Cooperation (formerly School of the Americas).
15. We support the Federal Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) courts for domestic surveillance and oppose attempts by surveillance authorities to finess FISA courts.

10 - Human Services

11 - Immigration

1. The undocumented worker problem must be dealt with in a manner which does not harm legal American workers.
2. We support developing a system through which foreign workers can be allowed to work legally in the United States with comparable US worker living wages and adequate benefits.
3. We support the abandonment of the infamous wall between Mexico and the USA, and support the devotion of resources toward assisting Mexico to develop its economy so that Mexicans do not have to flee to the north as economic refugees.
4. We should secure our border for the health and safety of our people while allowing the movement of workers. We support the repeal of the Secure Fence Act of 2006.
5. The undocumented worker problem must be solved in a humane way.

12 - Indian Tribes and Treaties

13 - Labor and Economic Justice

1. We support livable wages and health care benefits for all workers and health and pension benefits for all retirees.
2. We support a minimum wage strong enough to help lift workers from the constraints of poverty.
3. We support adequate housing for farm workers and a wage no less than the minimum wage.
4. We support the right of all workers to organize and belong to a union without any interference, intimidation or threats from employers or the government. We oppose so-called "right-to-work" laws.
5. We support the vigorous application of the Davis-Bacon Act as the criteria for wages paid on all publicly funded contracts.
6. We support collective bargaining for federal, state and private sector employees to negotiate wages and benefits, and other conditions of employment.
7. We support the United Farm Workers of America in their struggle for economic justice.
8. We support child labor standards limiting the hours young adults are allowed to work during the school year. Education must remain the highest priority for our young adults.

9. We support workers rights to unemployment insurance benefits when locked-out by their employer during a labor dispute.
10. We support existing laws prohibiting redefining workers as independent contractors rendering them ineligible for benefits and other protection.
11. We support the establishment and implementation of protective ergonomic standards for all employees.
12. We oppose any effort to repeal or weaken the Washington Industrial Safety and Health Act (WISHA), which sets safety standards and enforcement for the workplace.
13. We oppose any effort to restructure state and federal law related to overtime payment without the vigorous involvement and input from those most affected.
14. Recognizing that full employment is a mark of a strong society, we oppose wholesale outsourcing of jobs, and support policies which minimize outsourcing of jobs and product procurement.
15. We support fair and consistent enforcement of Labor and Industry (L&I) laws and regulations, including and especially those which protect workers.
16. We support establishment of healthy workplace laws, including and especially anti-bullying and anti-harassment laws. We support the establishment of a law that would provide legal protection for every worker targeted by a workplace bully.
17. We support a minimum standard of apprenticeship utilization of 15% for employment of apprentices on publicly-funded construction projects.
18. We support full funding of pensions earned in the United States.
19. Recognizing the opportunity costs of military service, we support better economic support for our military personnel, veterans, and their dependents.
20. Recognizing opportunity costs of public service, we oppose any attempt to repeal gain-sharing as an integral part of public employee pension benefits.
21. We support the principle of equal pay for equal work.
22. We support Washington state's L&I oversight of workman's compensation claims at the Hanford Site, and support full access to Hanford Site workers' medical records. We oppose RCW 51 which allows medical claims to be processed outside the state.
23. We support a tax code that is fair, progressive, and simple.
24. We support deficit reduction through fair enforcement of U.S. tax laws.
25. We oppose tax cuts that increase the federal debt in favor of the wealthiest.
26. We encourage the government to make every effort to recover and make available medical and industrial hygiene records related to the atomic workers so that they are paid just compensation for any injuries incurred during their employment or as a result of their employment as an atomic worker.

14 - Law and Justice

1. We support allowing alternatives to incarceration within the criminal justice system at both the pre-conviction stage (such as drug or mental health courts) and the post-conviction stage (such as community programs).
2. We support research, legislation and enforcement measures to acknowledge and address the current racial disparity between persons of color in prison and their proportion in the state population.
3. We support the rescinding of the "3-strikes" law completely.
4. We support investigation and prosecution of illegal actions of elected officials no matter how high their office. We insist on holding elected officials accountable, without regard to perceived political consequences.

5. We support limiting the exercise of executive privilege to be consistent with prior judicial precedent.
6. We support a new independent and open investigation of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001.
7. We support the repeal of the mandatory sentencing laws for drug offenses.

15 – Military

8. We support equal GI Bill privileges for ALL service men and women serving with no differences for National Guard vs. Regular services.

16 - Transportation

1. We support full funding for development and maintenance of both highway and railroad transportation infrastructure to facilitate commerce.
2. We support increased support for Amtrak.
3. Transportation infrastructure should be maintained so that their use as a homeland security asset is assured.
4. Washington State highways need to have up-to-date, complete, and unambiguous signage.