



Preamble

West Virginia State Democratic Party Platform

2008, an election year, looms large for Democrats in West Virginia and across the country. Democrats, the party of the people, work to improve the quality of life for families, communities in our state, country and across the world. West Virginia citizens treasure our state and its resources, believing that its people are their most precious resource. Creating a political platform becomes the stage for Democrats on which to prod possibilities of a harmonious and productive relationship between the governed and government. Each section of the 2008 political platform dramatizes that relationship and challenges political leaders to safeguard the lives, liberties, and pursuance of happiness.

The Independence declared in 1776 from a tyrant who trampled on the God-given rights of our forefathers and mothers is recurring in our life time: violating lives for profits, restricting liberties through illegal spying, displacing domestic tranquility with fear-mongering, dimming the pursuits of happiness with the burdens of an immoral war, deceiving Americans by manipulating facts fed to the press, and squeezing the life of two arms of government by a python-like executive. It is up to the American people to redress these grievances and to restore the constitutional rights through the election process.

Each section of this political platform spells out our best hopes for recovering our rights and forging a better future for all.

2008 Democratic Party Platform Committee

By State Senatorial District

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A – Education:

We believe in the Constitution of West Virginia and supporting a thorough and efficient educational system. Education is a cornerstone of the future and is a means of escaping poverty. A quality education starts with a qualified, certified teacher in every classroom.

A-1: preK-12

- a) Ensure that every child has the skills necessary for postsecondary education and/or the world of work.
- b) Provide each child the right to attend school in a safe, disciplined environment conducive for learning.
- c) Ensure every child comes to the classroom prepared and able to learn.
- d) Should take steps to recruit and retain high quality teachers. Every classroom should have a highly qualified and certified teacher.
- e) Believe educators, parents, and the community should take ownership of their schools.
- f) Support increased funding of programs to support math and reading.
- g) Support low cost, nutritional lunches for our students.
- h) Support WV Teacher Corp.
- i) Support the expansion of innovative use of technology
- j) Believes in the value of a teacher in the classroom, but support the usage of distance learning alternatives to insure a challenging curriculum.
- k) Believes that schools should be evaluated by multiple measures not standardized test scores.
- l) Supports preschool programs to ensure that all children enter school with having the same opportunities.
- m) Support after school programs to provide academic support and enrichment activities.
- n) State funding should be used for public education: pre-K to post high school education
- o) Endorse smaller class sizes.

A-2: post secondary education

- a) Support the idea that colleges should be focused on preparing students for a global economy.
- b) Affirm the right of every eligible West Virginian to obtain quality, accessible post secondary training.
- c) Support the funding of the Promise Scholarship and the encouragement of these recipients to make a return to the state either monetarily or by service
- d) Support participation of the Pre-Paid College Tuition program, continue to expand the Smart 529 program, and loan programs.
- e) Recognize the necessity of a strong community college system and its responsiveness to local needs of business and industry.
- f) Recognize the need to support adult basic education as an alternative path to becoming an educated productive citizen.

A-3: libraries

- a) Recognize libraries as the source of life long learning.
- b) Support the availability of accessible technology for all citizens.
- c) Support volunteer literacy programs.

B – Economy:

West Virginia's best natural resource is its people. West Virginia must grow its economy by creating and sustaining jobs that provide living wages with benefits. West Virginia's economic strength lies in its adaptable workforce and good work ethic. We strive to give our state's employers and employees the opportunity to live, work, and raise their family in a progressive economy.

B-1: Keys to Building a Stronger Economy

a. Infrastructure:

- 1) The foundation of a strong economy relies upon good roads, water and sewer, airports, waterways, internet access, and phone service.
- 2) Federal, state, and local governments must invest in a quality infrastructure that enables us to build an economy that works for all.
- 3) Believe that taxpayer dollars must be used in an accountable way to fund vital projects.

b. Workforce Development:

- 1) Believe that everyone should have the opportunity to have a good education, acquire new skills, and put those skills to work.

c. Small Business:

- 1) Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and we should encourage the entrepreneurial spirit.
- 2) Need to bridge the gap between government and small business with better communication of the many programs and services that are available.

d. Business Climate:

- 1) Promote a positive image of the state.
- 2) Believe that the state can help attract new business and aid existing employers, while expecting that they will be responsible corporate citizens.

e. Agriculture and Forestry

- 1) West Virginia Democrats support family farms.
- 2) We will ensure that West Virginia farmers have a strong safety net and can achieve profitability in the marketplace.
- 3) Support incentives for farmers and foresters to use good conservation practices and sustainable farming methods.

B-2: Employee Rights

a. Workplace Safety:

- 1) West Virginia Democrats believe that every working person should have a safe and healthful workplace environment. Therefore, we urge the state to pass pertinent safety laws that would further protect West Virginia's entire workforce.

b. Bargaining rights:

- 1) West Virginia Democrats urge State and Local Officials to support better bargaining for better wages, benefits and working conditions.

c. Pensions/Retirement:

- 1) West Virginia Democrats believe that every working person should be able to retire without the worry of Social Security being under-funded or eventually being phased out.

d. Wages

- 1) West Virginia Democrats support competitive, sustainable wages for all workers as to afford them a better quality of life.
- 2) We support the increase of the minimum wage to a living wage and the elimination of the minimum wage “loopholes”.

f. Safety net (unemployment/comp)

- 1) We support programs that would protect and provide a comfortable transition for working families in crisis.

B-3: Creating a Level Playing Field

a. Fair Trade:

- 1) Support trade with other nations, so long as there is a level playing field. American jobs should not be sacrificed to countries that do not enforce adequate safety, child labor, minimum wage, and environmental laws.

b. Outsourcing:

- 1) We discourage the practice because it is detrimental to West Virginia working families.

c. Illegal Immigration:

- 1) West Virginia Democrats support the efforts of our Democratic state and federal representatives to shield legal American workers from unfair competition at home by illegal workers.
- 2) Laws against employers hiring illegal workers must be enforced.

d. Consumer Protection:

- 1) West Virginia Democrats support strict enforcement of consumer protection laws.
- 2) We support the continued expansion of education, information, and mediation services to consumers.

C - Law and Order

The West Virginia State Democratic Party advocates for the strict enforcement and preservation of the Constitution of the United States and the West Virginia Constitution. The ideals set forth in these historic documents help protect West Virginia citizens against crimes, and invasion from foreign countries while also protecting the peace and dignity of the State.

Therefore, the West Virginia State Democratic Party makes it known that it supports the following:

C-1: Right to Bear Arms

- a) Supports the U.S. Constitution, including the Second Amendment - the right to bear arms.

C-2: National Guard

- a) Supports a sufficient numbers of National Guard personnel to protect the citizens within the state.

C-3: Incarceration

- a) Seek appropriate alternatives to incarceration

C-4: Immigration

- a) Support fair and humane immigration laws that are enforced to protect the legal residents of the State of West Virginia and the United States of America

C-5: State Capital Security

- a) Increase and improve security at the West Virginia State Capital

C-6: Funding

- a) Adequate, sustained, and effective monitoring of funding

D - Good Government

The Democratic Party stands for honest, open and fair government for and by the people. All elected officials must be held to a higher moral standing and be held accountable to the West Virginia electorate.

Therefore, the West Virginia State Democratic Party supports and will work toward improving and/or attaining the following:

D-1: Ethical Conduct of all elected officials

D-2: Advocate responsible spending and balanced budgets

D-3: Ensuring that governmental operations strictly follow federal and state laws, codes, and/or guidelines

D-4: Legal, clean elections

D-5: Extending voting rights to non-affiliated voters in the primary election process

D-6: Adequate polling places and disabled accessibility in accordance with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA)

D-7: Improved public education on candidates running for office and the electoral process.

D-8: Call for placing a high priority on providing competitive salaries, benefits, and opportunities for serving in public office, where applicable, for all public employees

E - Environment

The West Virginia State Democratic Party is dedicated to working toward a cleaner, healthier environment that promotes energy independence. As a moral obligation to future generations, the West Virginia State Democratic Party advocates for broad improvements in the federal and state energy policies to combat the growing environmental issues both globally and here at home.

The West Virginia State Democratic Party believes in:

E-1: Energy Independence

- a) Believes energy independence that uses "clean-coal" technology to fuel and power America as well as expand West Virginia's energy resources to include all forms of clean and renewable energy.

E-2: Clean Water

- a) Support enforcement of the Clean Water Act and the return to the Kyoto Treaty that helps preserve the community's, state's, and nation's environment;

E-3: Reclamation

- a) Reclamation of mined areas should be complete.
- b) Strongly support enforcement of regulations with regard to all extractive industries.

F – Health and Social Issues

The health and welfare of West Virginia residents should remain at the forefront of policy discussions as the status of our citizen's health remains an urgent concern.

F-1: Health

- a) Support the concept of a national health care system.
- b) Believe the "Welfare" should be a second chance, not a way of life.
- c) Support the development of a new vision of health and welfare in West Virginia.
- d) Care about the physical, mental and social health of all residents
- e) Support a continued look for creative ways to improve quality health care.

F-2: Health Care Delivery Systems

- a) Commit to ensuring our citizens have ample access to quality health care professionals and facilities.

F-3: Social Programs

- a) Support existing programs i.e. Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Money Follows the Person (MFP).

F-4: Children and Families

- a) Committed to strengthening family life, therefore, we continue to support:
 - 1) Vacation time because it enhances family life, health and wellness, as well as increases productivity in the work place;
 - 2) The right to safe, quality daycare/after-school care for children;
 - 3) The rights of consumers to choose in-home care over institutional care;
 - 4) Effective intervention services for families in crisis, i.e. domestic violence;
 - 5) An aggressive, effective and fair system of child support collection;
 - 6) Where warranted, a safe and secure monitored visitation and/or exchange site in each county.

F-5: Seniors

- a) Recognizes senior citizens are an integral part of our society;
- b) Committed to helping seniors to retain their independence, dignity and standard of living.
- c) Believe Senior Centers across our state provide programs that are critical to the well being of this valued population.
- d) Committed to finding and implementing solutions to critical issues facing the aging population, namely: healthcare, nutrition, exercise, transportation, housing, and fraudulent schemes.
- e) Recommends an increase in Geriatric Education for medical students in all state medical schools.

F-6: Health Education

- a) Supports a comprehensive health education program by:
 - 1) Supporting wellness centers, well lit and safe outdoor neighborhood playgrounds, along with hiking, biking and walking trails;
 - 2) Restoring full school programs of physical education that include nutrition, wellness, recess, and an overall healthy lifestyle;
 - 3) Support for music and art programs and our cultural heritage, recognizing their therapeutic value;
 - 4) Encouraging families and work places to participate in physical activities on a daily basis;
 - 5) Educating citizens about healthy eating habits and wellness programs;
 - 6) Providing clear information and promoting awareness of existing programs and facilities to support health among citizens.

G – Veterans

The West Virginia State Democratic Party stands beside the generations of men and women who have bravely served its country in the United States Armed Forces. West Virginia is home to one of the highest per capita veterans populations in the nation.

Therefore, the West Virginia State Democratic Party believes the following:

G- 1: Funding

- a) Continue to pursue policies that provide the necessary funding to the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs (VA) and the West Virginia Veterans Administration for the best quality health care possible for the nation's veterans;
- b) Supporting guaranteed funding for veteran's programs now and into the future, thereby, becoming a mandatory budget item to ensure viability from year-to-year as opposed to its current state as a discretionary budget item;

G- 2: Healthcare

- a) It is the responsibility of the United States and the State of West Virginia to appropriately provide accessible, quality care for the service members who return home from military service on a daily basis;
- b) Being vigilant in ensuring returning soldiers that he or she will receive not only the visible, physical wounds, but also the serious, debilitating mental wounds that have been inflicted during service, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD);

G-3: Benefits

- a) It is a priority that veterans are provided concurrent receipt, ending the unjust prohibition against veterans receiving both disability and retirement benefits;
- b) Recognizes the need to reform the Survivors Benefits Plan (SBP), which allows personnel to pay a monthly premium in order to ensure their spouse will receive an annuity in the event of their demise.