

46th District Democrats Platform – 2004-2005

PREAMBLE

This platform is a declaration of our commitment to human rights, justice and opportunity for all, and to the principle that political power should be wielded lightly, responsibly and with full recognition that it is a public trust conferred by the citizenry. We adopt and publish the following policies to enhance general understanding and to assure their support by public officials and candidates for office.

CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. We declare that civil rights should not be compromised for any reason, including a “war on terrorism.” We oppose the erosion of our civil rights that has occurred since September 11, 2001, and therefore call for drastic revision of the USAPATRIOT Act and for strict upholding of the Bill of Rights, including due process requirements and protections against unreasonable search and seizure.
2. We support the legalization of same-sex marriage in Washington, the repeal of state and federal “Defense of Marriage” Acts, and recognition of same-sex marriages in other states or countries. We support complete equality of civil rights, including the right to marry, for all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
3. We are committed to the attainment of equal civil and human rights for all persons, and therefore demand vigorous enforcement of existing civil rights laws. We support strong affirmative action laws and policies to ensure that prejudices based on gender, race, age, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, gender identity, or political affiliation do not prevent qualified persons from obtaining employment, promotion, education, housing or any other social good.
4. We demand federal recognition of the Duwamish Tribe.
5. We reaffirm our support of every woman’s right of reproductive choice.
6. We support state legislation to permit, with suitable safeguards, medically assisted death with dignity. We oppose any actions by federal authorities to interfere with such process.
7. Voting is the basis of our democracy. We support vigorous enforcement of the right to vote for all segments of our citizenry. Felons who have served their term should regain their voting rights.
8. We support full rights of people with disabilities to equal access to public accommodations, employment, transportation, telecommunications, voting, and government services in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

CULTURAL AFFAIRS

1. We call for reversal of the FCC ruling permitting consolidation of media ownership.
2. We demand that the board of National Public Radio be independent and free from party politics; we decry political packing of this and other national boards and commissions.
3. In return for their profitable use of public right of way, cable companies should be required to give the public fair compensation including adequate public access channels, technological support, and modest fees for basic-cable service.
4. We support the establishment of liberal talk-radio locally and nationally, and the development of low-power radio broadcasting for educational and other non-profit institutions.

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5. We support renewal of funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the Washington State Arts Commission.
6. We seek the reinstatement of individual artist grants from the National Endowments for the Arts.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE; TAXES

Taxes are an expression of our values as Americans. They are a sign of our own best obligations to ourselves, including maintenance of our roads and bridges, caring for the vulnerable among us, and educating the next generation of citizens. We are willing to pay taxes appropriate to our community's needs and to each individual's ability to pay. It is government's responsibility to use its citizens' tax dollars as efficiently as possible.

1. We support steps to decrease the growing gap between rich and poor, which is fueled by the downward trend in wages, loss of living-wage jobs, soaring executive paychecks, and an increasingly regressive system of taxation too dependent on sales taxes.
2. We strongly support a progressive tax system that is fair and equitable to all citizens and businesses at both the state and federal levels, including reduction of Washington's regressive sales tax and onerous Business & Occupations tax.
3. To protect our nation's future economic stability and reduce record deficits, the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy should be rescinded and the Federal estate tax re-established for estates of \$5 million or more.
4. The long-term solvency of Social Security is essential; we oppose privatizing the program or reducing its benefits.
5. Tax and spending limits must allow us to meet the real needs of our society and economy. Arbitrary limits such as Initiatives 601 and 695 have created chaos with our public finances and have made government less accountable; we believe the time has come for outright repeal of both of them.
6. We call for review and sunseting of the 500-plus tax exemptions in Washington State law.
7. We strongly support the protection of both private and public pension plans, and the right of pension-plan enrollees to be included in processes affecting their pensions.
8. We call for a ban on government contracts for any U.S. company that reincorporates offshore to evade taxes.
9. We support cancellation of all tax credits and exemptions for companies that outsource jobs overseas. Our governments should not enter into contracts that permit overseas outsourcing of labor.

EDUCATION

1. We support repeal of the "No Child Left Behind Act" and the establishment of a program that better supports universal pre-school and kindergarten through college education.
2. We support full educational funding for schools by a state constitutional amendment and, in the meantime, adequate funding for:
 - a. decreased class size;
 - b. pre-kindergarten (including Head Start) and after-school programs;
 - c. counselors and school nurses in every school;
 - d. job training, vocational education, and apprenticeship programs for non-college bound students;
 - e. increased compensation and benefits for Washington public school and higher education instructors;
 - f. renovation of decaying facilities;
 - g. colleges to keep tuition rates from rising faster than inflation rates; and

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- h. increased capacity to accommodate all who wish to pursue higher education.
- 3. We support inclusion of fine arts education in the Basic Education Act as defined by state law.
- 4. We support restraints on aggressive military recruiting in the public schools.
- 5. We oppose charter schools on the ground that in addition to draining funds from the public school system, their accountability extends only to their own boards because they are exempted from state rules that regulate public schools.
- 6. We oppose private school vouchers because they drain resources from our public education institutions.
- 7. We oppose the commercial exploitation of students in public schools.
- 8. We support passage of school levies by simple majorities.
- 9. The “WASL” has proven unsatisfactory. We support practical student assessments that allow for multiple retake opportunities, remediation options and alternative methods of assessment.
- 10. We support the preservation of equal opportunities for women as mandated by Title IX.
- 11. To facilitate access to higher education, the key to individual well-being and overall economic progress, college tuition should be tax deductible or a tax credit.
- 12. We support college loan adjustments for graduates who choose public service careers.
- 10. We advocate increased funding for public libraries, so they may stay open longer hours including nights and weekends.

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

A healthy environment is essential to our future and that of our planet. Survival of humans and other organisms depends on clean air, clean water, safe food, an intact ozone layer and sustainability of resources. Environmental protection is not inconsistent with our economic well-being; indeed, we need to protect our environment in order to keep our economy healthy.

- 1. Environment-related decisions must be based on reliable scientific knowledge and be adequately funded.
- 2. We must promote, both domestically and worldwide, development and use of such non-polluting, non-nuclear energy sources as hydrogen, wind, solar, ocean, geothermal and biomass, while strongly emphasizing conservation as a technique for curbing energy consumption.
- 3. The U.S. must recognize its role in global climate change and renew its participation in the Kyoto Accords. We must pursue, both domestically and worldwide, an aggressive strategy for prompt mini-mization of greenhouse gas and ozone-depleting chemical emissions.
- 4. We must encourage domestic and worldwide commitments to sustainable utilization of resources and reduced consumption of nonrenewable resources, including fossil fuels. Use of motor vehicles should be reduced. Alternative energy sources must be developed and implemented so as to reduce dramatically our dependence on foreign oil and make the U.S. ultimately self-sufficient in energy, without degradation of environmentally sensitive areas.
- 5. Hazardous wastes should be treated and disposed of near their origin, in soundly engineered and monitored disposal facilities. Our state should not be a depository for the nation’s radioactive waste. Cleanup must be the #1 priority at Hanford, followed by development of technology to reprocess nuclear wastes into usable fuel. There should be no further shipments of radioactive waste to Hanford until the site is brought into compliance with existing regulations, the

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use of unlined soil trenches has been terminated, and the cumulative impact of past waste disposal has been fully assessed; to fail in these respects would interfere with cleanup and greatly increase risks to public health.

6. The use of herbicides, pesticides and other toxic materials must be cut back in order to reduce environmental contamination and protect our food supply and the health of all, particularly children. Organic farming and sustainable agriculture deserve funding and increased support. The export of banned chemicals and toxic waste to third world countries must be ended, and new chemicals tested for their safety before being released into the environment instead of waiting until harm has been shown.

7. Tax and other incentives should favor sustainable businesses that conserve energy and/or utilize technologies that prevent pollution and keep toxins out of their manufacturing processes and the environment. The Superfund Tax should be reinstated to continue the cleanup of hazardous waste sites at the expense of polluters instead of the general public.

8. Environmental protections including those previously instituted under the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts, but reversed or weakened by the Bush administration, must be reinstated – and the provisions of those Acts vigorously enforced. We must protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas, including wetlands, and maintain the viability and diversity of plants and animals within watersheds and other ecosystems. Plans to protect the habitat of wild salmon and steelhead, including preservation of Northwest forests and maintenance of adequate river flows, must be fully implemented.

9. Our state's Growth Management Act must be enforced and strengthened, to protect against further urban sprawl that eats up farmland, forests, wildlife habitat and our remaining natural resources.

10. National Parks and wilderness areas must be maintained as pristine areas, with a firm prohibition on mining, drilling, and any other activity likely to deface or pollute those national treasures. Threatened wild and roadless, forested areas must be permanently protected from road building, logging, motorized recreation, and any other type of development. We oppose privatization of professional staff in National Parks and National Forests.

11. Individual and governmental efforts to reduce residential and business waste and promote the reuse and recycling of materials must be expanded, with continued development of recycled-material markets that meet strict environmental and worker health standards. Manufacturer deposits on computers and televisions should be required, together with a safe recycling program by such manufacturers to remove toxic materials from our landfills and from third world countries that aren't set up to safely recycle them.

FOREIGN POLICY

1. We strongly support working within the world community in a spirit of cooperation, generosity, and democracy, to resolve international conflict and eliminate terrorist networks through multilateral diplomacy and the strengthening of international institutions, such as the United Nations, including full funding of the United Nations.

2. We call on the U.S. government to retire the "doctrine" of preemptive war and end efforts, covert as well as overt, to destabilize other national governments.

3. We call for restoring international aid for family planning and education, and increased funding for humanitarian programs that address the root causes of instability and terrorism.

4. We call for ratification of and compliance with the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the Genocide Convention, the Biological and Chemical Weapons Conventions, the Small Arms Treaty, the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, the international Land Mines treaties, treaties implementing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Criminal Court, and implementation of the Space Preservation Treaty against space-based weapons.

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5. We renounce development of new nuclear weapons and urge the strengthening of international disarmament treaties. We call for an end to government assistance to or contracts for companies that export weapons systems that contribute to the international arms race.

6. Military procurement must be cut, to eliminate bloated and unneeded weaponry and end development and deployment of destabilizing weapons systems. The savings should be invested in international peacekeeping and redevelopment, domestic local responders, education, health care, environmental clean-up, urban infrastructure, Social Security, veterans' benefits, and other pressing domestic needs.

7. We oppose U.S. training of foreign military or police forces that suppress human rights in their own countries.

Iraq, Israel, Palestine and Cuba

8. We support the complete, timely withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and the renunciation of plans to build permanent military bases in Iraq.

9. We support prompt creation of a truly democratic, independent and fully representative Iraqi government chosen through free and fair elections, all under UN auspices.

10. U.S. policy should recognize that Palestinian and Israeli lives are equally precious and that both are entitled to peace, justice, and security. Further U.S. aid should be contingent on (a) commitments not to use the aid for killing each other or for one to occupy the other's territory, (b) dismantling of the Israeli "Security Wall" and return of all lands confiscated by the wall's construction, (c) compensation of dispossessed Palestinians for their losses, and (d) withdrawal of Israeli troops and settlers from the West Bank and Gaza.

11. We support the Cuban people's right to self-determination in political and economic spheres. We oppose the outmoded and inhumane U.S. policies that restrict commerce and other contact between the Cuban and American peoples, and we call for normalization of relations with that nearby nation, including lifting of the U.S.-imposed embargo and travel ban.

Terms of Trade

12. We call for U.S. withdrawal from the WTO, to be replaced by new enforceable trade agreements incorporating human rights, labor rights, and respect for environmental justice and bilateral environmental treaties. The adjudication processes of those agreements must be transparent, must include an accountable appellate process, and must not override federal, state, or local law.

13. We call for fundamental renegotiation of or withdrawal from NAFTA based on the same principles, and rejection of (a) the upcoming Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, which would extend it throughout the Western Hemisphere, and (b) similar agreements that have been proposed worldwide.

14. We call for rejection of the proposed Global Agreement on Trade in Services, which would privatize such vital public services as education, water, fire, electricity and human services. We further oppose the International Monetary Fund's structural adjustment policies that compel privatization of vital government services as a condition of refinancing national debt.

15. U.S. companies must be prohibited from engaging in practices abroad that would be prohibited at home.

HEALTH CARE

Health care being a basic human right, it is a fundamental responsibility of government to ensure the health and safety of its citizens. As noted by the U.S. General Accounting Office, "If the U.S. were to shift to a system of universal coverage and a single payer, as in Canada, the savings in administrative cost would be more than enough to offset the cost" [of the change in system]. Therefore, we call for:

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1. Establishment of a nationwide, publicly funded, accountable, nonprofit single-payer universal health care plan, including prescription drug coverage for all and the elimination of co-pays.
2. Passage of the proposed U.S. Constitutional amendment introduced by Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr., that would secure equality of health care for all Americans as a fundamental human right.
3. Negotiations to bring pharmaceutical, insurance, administrative, and other costs under control.
4. Repeal of the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. Rather than assisting seniors through negotiated cost controls, this misconceived legislation fosters unrestricted cost escalation by insurance and drug companies by prohibiting both collective negotiation for lower drug prices and competition by Canadian suppliers. Unless the Act is repealed, seniors will be spending more on drugs in 2007, when the Act is in full effect, than they did when there was no Medicare drug benefit at all.

Other national issues in health care

5. All medical coverage should include, on an equal basis, physical health (including medical, dental, vision and alternative therapies), mental health, and substance abuse treatment.
6. Funds owed to keep Social Security solvent and ensure access to Medicare and Medicaid must be restored.
7. The Supreme Court having acknowledged in 2000 that “tobacco use, particularly among children and adolescents, poses perhaps the single most significant threat to public health in the United States,” we call for legislation authorizing the FDA to regulate tobacco as a drug.
8. To confront the obesity epidemic, serious programs must be developed and broadly implemented to provide nutritional planning, information distribution, physical fitness opportunities and heart health centers for children and adults suffering from obesity-related conditions.
9. We call for funding of quality long-term care that honors consumer choice and provides adequate training and living wages for caregivers.
10. We demand a strong Patient’s Bill of Rights, including (a) protection of medical privacy by closing loopholes that allow the selling and disclosure of medical and pharmaceutical records, and (b) provision for prompt payment of insurance benefits, with availability of legal claims when other remedies fall short.
11. We call for expanded funding of research into, and treatment of, major diseases such as AIDS. Stem cell research must be freed of the Bush-imposed controls and given expanded funding. Indeed, we demand an end to the administration’s broad-scale distortion of scientific knowledge for political purposes, most recently exemplified by the dismissal of experts from the President’s Council on Bioethics for disagreeing with his politically motivated ban on stem cell research

State issues in health care

12. The legislature must address our health care crisis by developing an insurance system that is affordable and accessible to all, regardless of income level or place of employment. Under that system:
 - a. each employer shall offer quality and affordable health insurance to its employees, and
 - b. employers of 50 or more that choose not to pay for their employees’ health care shall pay, to the State, an amount equal to 80% of the per-person cost of the State’s Basic Health Plan (BHP). The funds thus realized would be used to provide coverage to such employees and their families through the BHP, with the resultant savings used to help subsidize health coverage for employees of small employers.
13. We call for further curbs on smoking in public places, to limit exposure to second-hand smoke, and we demand that remaining tobacco-settlement monies be used solely for health-related programs.

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HUMAN SERVICES

Ensuring adequate human services is among the highest priorities of government, especially for those on the margins of society, including children, the elderly, and people who are impoverished, homeless, mentally ill, disabled, or living with addictions.

1. We support welfare reform that will reduce poverty, not just the welfare rolls. Quality, affordable childcare, education, training and substance-abuse treatment must be provided to help working parents get off welfare.
2. We must galvanize the political will to end homelessness in our communities. It is the government's responsibility to take the actions necessary to ensure that all people have safe and affordable housing. Affordable-housing subsidies should be targeted at those who make 50% or less of the Area Median Income.
3. We support public assistance (General Assistance-Unemployable/GA-U) and Medicaid to safeguard the vulnerable poor and people with disabilities who cannot reasonably provide for themselves.
4. Family planning and science-based sex education are effective tools that must be made available to give individuals and families control over their reproductive decisions.

LABOR

1. We believe in the right to organize and to collective bargaining for all workers. To ensure these rights, we call for:
 - a. repeal of the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act, which has tilted labor law in favor of employers;
 - b. repeal of so-called right-to-work laws throughout the country;
 - c. a ban on captive-audience and one-on-one anti-union meetings;
 - d. automatic (card-check) recognition of a union upon its obtaining a majority of the cards signed in a bargaining unit;
 - e. a right of new bargaining units to mandatory arbitration of the first contract;
 - f. a streamlined appeals process in the NLRB and meaningful financial penalties for employers found to have been negotiating in bad faith;
 - g. a right to strike without fear of reprisal or permanent replacement; and
 - h. the Seattle Monorail Authority to assure the foregoing rights for those who will operate and maintain the monorail.
2. We support a workers' bill of rights that includes rights of association, assembly and free speech, due process, a safe and healthy workplace, freedom from discrimination, legal protection for whistleblowers, and democracy and fair elections within unions.
3. We believe that migrant and seasonal workers and their families deserve safe and adequate housing, medical care, education, and sanitary facilities.
4. We believe in equal pay for equal work.
5. We oppose mandatory overtime.
6. We support payment of prevailing wage rates on all government contracts, and the practice of 15% set-asides for apprentices.
7. We support the establishment of a living wage in Seattle.
8. We support extended unemployment benefits and retraining opportunities for workers who are locked out.

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9. To assure that unemployment statistics are accurate, unemployed persons whose benefits have been exhausted should continue to be counted as unemployed.

LAW AND JUSTICE

1. Governmental killing of a human being in our name is unacceptable. Capital punishment, at both the state and federal levels, must be abolished.

2. We support DNA testing to convict the guilty and exonerate the innocent in criminal cases.

3. Criminal justice should include greater emphasis on preventive and rehabilitative measures. State and federal policy must include (a) drug education that reflects established scientific knowledge rather than outdated political dogma and myth, and (b) a focus on treatment and rehabilitation of drug and alcohol abusers. Minor drug offenses should be given reduced priority, as prescribed by Seattle's recently approved Initiative. More drug courts are needed, and asset forfeitures should be based on conviction of a crime rather than mere arrest or assumption of guilt.

4. Consistent with preservation of civil liberties, we support reasonable security measures at airports, bus and train stations, border crossings and ports, to protect the public from terrorism

5. We support universal gun registration and licensing, background checks as prerequisite to all gun sales (including at gun shows), prohibition of fully automatic weapons, and required safe gun storage in the home.

6. To protect personal liberty and restore balance in our courts, Democrats must assign a high priority to confirming judges who have a proven record of adhering to the law without promoting extremist views or personal political agendas.

7. Corporate rights and responsibilities need to be redefined, including a rollback of Constitutional protections afforded on the pretext that a corporation is a "person." Economic crime by corporate executives should be as subject to imprisonment as are other nonviolent thefts, based on the amount stolen.

TRANSPORTATION

1. Replacement of the increasingly perilous Alaskan Way viaduct must be the highest transportation priority at the local, regional and state levels.

2. We favor the development and funding of multiple modes of public transportation, to better serve the public and reduce the use of motor vehicles.

3. The 18th Amendment to the Washington State Constitution must be repealed so that Washington's gasoline tax may be used to fund transit as well as highways.

4. In urban areas, we favor transit-oriented development and provision of economical mass transit to attract increased ridership, including monorail and light rail connections between Northgate and downtown Seattle by 2007.

5. Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards should be increased and made fully applicable to SUVs and light trucks, and all tax breaks for such vehicles should be eliminated. A luxury tax should be imposed on the purchase of deluxe automobiles and limousines because, in addition to their inefficient use of fuel, they cause heavy wear and tear on all roads.

6. We call for increased penalties and rigorous enforcement of the requirement that large trucks stay out of the left lane in certain freeway situations.

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7. Safe facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians and wheelchairs must be provided, including secure storage of bicycles and a safer environment for people waiting for or disembarking from school buses or other public transportation at locations that are now poorly lit and lack marked crossings.

THE POLITICAL PROCESS

1. We demand an end to the corruptive influence of big money in politics, including initiative campaigns. FCC licensing should require that free radio and TV time be provided for candidates and ballot issues before each election, subject to criteria set by the Federal Elections Commission.
2. We call for abolition of the Electoral College, an anachronism that unduly magnifies the role of small states and narrow pluralities in choosing our only nationally elected officials.
3. Washington's initiative process must be reformed so that our elected representatives are not hamstrung in their efforts to make revenue and spending decisions in the public interest.
4. To encourage maximum participation, any day upon which a general election is held should be made a holiday in the relevant jurisdiction(s).
5. We insist that registered voters not be improperly removed from the voting rolls, that felons who have served their time be restored their right to vote, and that any utilization of electronic voting machines be accompanied by an auditable paper record of each vote cast.
6. Library property should be added to the list of public places where organizations can register voters in a politicking-free manner that does not hamper library operations.
7. We urge the Washington State Democratic Party to (a) concentrate resources on building a strong and lasting network of grassroots volunteers, and (b) give timely, targeted publicity to the religious surrogate option for representation in any party caucus held on a religious holiday.