



2008 SPOKANE COUNTY DEMOCRATS PARTY PLATFORM



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PREAMBLE

We believe that democratic principles are the foundation of a safe, stable, and prosperous future and that these principles must be woven into the fabric of our social, cultural, and economic lives.

We declare our commitment to human rights, justice, and opportunity for all. Our platform is supported by our belief that government exists to accomplish for us collectively that which we cannot accomplish individually.

We believe:

·we have a duty as citizens to participate in government, and to assure accountability and openness to the people;

·we are all responsible for the ethical, economic and environmental legacy we leave for our children;

·we are responsible as individuals for our moral and spiritual beliefs and personal choices, not government;

·we have a personal obligation to promote individual responsibility and mutual respect;

·we must remain actively committed to the recognition that diversity strengthens our society.

We adopt this platform to ensure that voters understand our principles and that candidates for public office understand and support our goals.

ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

We believe that our environment and our energy supply are the most important issues of our times. The economy is certainly of critical immediate concern, but we view the environment as a generational issue.

For the sake of our children, we must address the crisis of global warming and become responsible stewards of our environment.

Every individual has a fundamental right to clean air, pure water, safe food and a healthy natural environment. No government should make any law, regulation, treaty or agreement infringing upon these rights.

We support:

·efforts to make energy independence a reality for our nation;

·conservation and development of clean, efficient, renewable, sources of power;

·strong measures that begin to immediately reduce greenhouse gases;

·Spokane River and Spokane Valley/Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer cleanup and protection, including continued efforts towards elimination of phosphates;

·strengthening the Growth Management Act, and supporting neighborhood and community planners in their efforts to protect our quality of life;

"The Spokane County Democratic Central Committee is headquartered at Spokane Democrats, 1003 East Trent Avenue, Suite 175 Spokane, WA 99202. We invite you to stop by, say hello, and join the party!"

- science conducted without the interference of politics;
- federal government restoration and cleanup of contaminated lands and water; especially in the Hanford Reach;
- long-term policies that give priority to the preservation of biodiversity, and the protection of ecosystems and watersheds;
- efforts to reduce the use of petroleum-based pesticides, and other persistent toxic chemicals;
- programs to reduce polluted urban and agricultural run-off into waterways, wetlands and aquifers;
- current state law, which requires voter approval of large public energy projects before bonds are issued;
- strong public policy that restores and preserves wilderness, old-growth, road free areas, wildlife corridors, wetlands, and other environmentally sensitive areas;
- efforts to reduce waste and to promote the reuse and recycling of materials;
- utilizing biomass conversion including farm products and byproducts into renewable energy, including biodiesel and ethanol.

We oppose:

- any initiative weakening State and Local Land-Use regulations;
- sale or disposal of public lands;
- waste disposal and oil exploration in any wildlife refuge, wilderness area, or other environmentally sensitive area;
- importing new nuclear waste to the Hanford Nuclear Reservation;
- exemption of military bases from environmental regulation;
- attempts to privatize BPA and to increase BPA rates.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is a domestic strategic resource vital to American independence and is the number one industry in Washington.

We recognize:

- the need for new and sustainable development in rural areas;
- the role of farmers as 'stewards of the land'.

We believe:

- agriculture subsidies should go to family farms and not to agribusiness;
- the Government is responsible for ensuring the safety of our imported and domestic food supply;
- any decisions about breaching, removing, compromising, or encroaching on the Pacific Northwest dams or waterways should be based on sound, credible economic and scientific information.

We support:

- clear labeling of food including nation of origin, genetically modified organism status, irradiation, organic status, and expiration dates;
- programs that provide an economic stimulus for survival, protection, and improvement of rural communities, including development of affordable high-speed internet access and rural transportation services;
- local food production;
- funding for agricultural commodity programs to assure long-term, economic viability of agriculture;
- conservation incentives that help conserve agricultural land;
- development of domestic and international marketing opportunities for crop and animal products;
- expanded land grant college funding of research for sustainable farming;
- adequate governmental support for agricultural research and extension programs.

ECONOMY, CORPORATE POWER & MEDIA

We believe a strong and stable economy is essential to the workings of a democracy. In a global market, government has a role to ensure that markets are free of special interest manipulation.

The Economy***We support:***

- international trade based on fair trade including living wages and environmental protection;
- licensing of persons involved in the financial industry;
- oversight and regulation of investment banks;
- return to fair bankruptcy laws;
- elimination of predatory lending and the re-instituting of "usury" laws;
- strict control of "pay day" lenders.

Corporate Power***We believe:***

- corporations are vital to our economy and standard of living;
- business-friendly laws can be beneficial;
- corporations should not exert an undue influence on our body politic or use our courts to thwart our democratically enacted laws.

We support:

- substantial penalties against corporations that repeatedly violate our laws;
- economic policies conducive to the growth of entrepreneurship and small business;

- eliminating tax incentives for exporting jobs and giving tax incentives to those who create jobs.

We oppose:

- the Supreme Court precedent that corporations are people;
- excessive executive compensation;
- tax breaks to corporations and other corporate welfare, unless a verifiable public interest is served.

Media

We believe:

- in internet neutrality;
- the public owns electronic frequencies and the Internet, which should be managed to serve the public interest.

We support:

- the return of the "Fairness Doctrine";
- media ownership regulations to avoid domination of our airwaves by only a few corporate entities;
- laws requiring all major media outlets to provide free and equal access to political candidates;
- encouraging minority and community media ownership;
- ensuring that media license holders provide diverse programming;
- increased funding for public broadcasting including documentary films and non-commercial news programs;
- increased support for community-level, nonprofit, and non-commercial radio and TV, and cable.

EDUCATION

We believe public schools are integral to a strong democracy by bringing together people with diverse experiences, abilities and backgrounds for the common purpose of learning.

We believe:

- it is the paramount duty of the State to make ample provision for the education of all children;
- it is the responsibility of government to provide access to affordable public education for people of all ages;
- it is imperative that physical facilities support a quality learning environment.

We support:

- stable and adequate funding for all education, and for governmentally mandated programs including gifted, and special education programs;

- simple majority votes for all school levies and bond issues;
- funding for small class size allowing for individual instruction and support;
- age-appropriate, scientific research-based education on topics such as health, evolution, sexuality and alcohol/drug abuse.

We oppose:

- basing school and student assessment and accountability solely on “one size fits all” high stakes testing;
- alternative public educational programs such as voucher and charter school programs that dilute funding from public education programs.

FOREIGN POLICY

The U.S.A. should seek a rebuilding of our reputation in the world as a cooperative and just country.

We support:

- nonviolent conflict resolution;
- a multilateral approach to foreign policy;
- the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- honoring and upholding the rights, welfare, and environment of all indigenous peoples;
- abandoning the doctrine of pre-emptive warfare;
- developing and implementing an equitable and rapid exit strategy from Iraq;
- nonviolent initiatives aimed at rebuilding civil society and encouraging democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- encouraging strict health, safety, and environmental standards worldwide;
- the end of military and economic support to governments that violate human and civil rights;
- increasing federal funding to combat world hunger and disease;
- full participation in the International World Court.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICAL REFORM

Government must reflect our values as citizens. Our government must be fiscally sound, operate ethically, and be open, transparent and accountable to the people.

We believe:

- taxes are the price of a civil society; we want our taxes to be levied fairly and spent frugally;
- all Government agencies should be appropriately funded and fully accountable.

We support:

- fair, voter-verifiable, and auditable voting systems;
- an open and fair blanket primary system for Washington State;
- public financing of election campaigns;
- enforcement of all open meeting laws;
- transparency for all Government expenditures.

We oppose:

- bypassing the courts in matters involving domestic surveillance;
- privatizing, outsourcing or off-shoring of governmental public services.

HEALTHCARE

We believe access to quality mental and physical health care is a basic human right and is essential to national safety and well-being.

We support:

- creating a universal, publicly funded, single-payer, not-for-profit, comprehensive health care system preserving consumer choice;
- amending the Medicare prescription drug benefit to require pricing negotiations with pharmaceutical manufacturers;
- improving Medicaid benefits to adequately cover home-care and facility care services;
- regulation, accountability, and inspection of institutional and residential health care systems to assure quality care;
- living wages and quality training for caregivers including all home-care service providers;
- requiring pharmacists to fill prescriptions authorized by a physician;
- increasing funding for prevention programs and disease research, including stem cell research;
- retaining the autonomy of the County Public Health Officer and elimination of political influence on the office.

HUMAN RIGHTS

We believe that equal and unalienable rights of all human beings are the foundation of freedom

and justice in the world and are essential to the preservation of democracy. These rights include food, shelter, safety, health care, education, employment, and access to timely legal counsel.

We believe:

- individuals have the right to privacy in all personal matters;
- individuals have the right to sovereignty over their own bodies;
- in the separation of church and state.

We support:

- appropriate and affordable access to legal services for people experiencing discrimination;
- strong legislation, treatment programs and education designed to reduce harassment, intimidation and domestic or sexual violence;
- legal statements that prevent discrimination against any group or individual;
- application of the Geneva Convention to all detainees, foreign or domestic, no matter where they are held;
- repeal of laws that compromise constitutionally protected rights;
- use of education and treatment programs to supplement incarceration of individuals as appropriate;
- right of confidentiality of financial, medical, and genetic information.

We abhor:

- harassment, intimidation and domestic or sexual violence.

INDIAN TRIBES & TREATIES

Treaties made between sovereign Indian nations and the United States government must be upheld and preserved. The WSDCC and SCDCC will work with local tribes and urban Indians to identify issues of support and opposition that will enhance efforts throughout Indian Country.

We Oppose:

- exploitative conversion and patent of natural, traditional or organic plants or medicines by the pharmaceutical industry.

LABOR & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We believe that economic fairness is a cornerstone of a democratic society and that a living wage

is a basic right.

We support:

- creating and maintaining a minimum wage that is a living wage;
- adequate funding and resources for programs addressing the problem of homelessness in our communities;
- international trade agreements that assure fair marketing and employment practices;
- establishing a progressive tax system at both the state and federal level;
- establishing a fair system of paying for community growth;
- maintaining the rights of all workers to organize and use mediation, arbitration, and the right to strike without fear of reprisal or replacement;
- maintaining a separate and dedicated Social Security Trust Fund and disabled and dependent survivor Social Security benefits;

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- equal pay for equal work;
- a workers' "Bill of Rights" that includes right of assembly, association and free speech, due process, freedom from discrimination, and democracy within unions;
- legislation to provide oversight and protection to guarantee the security of pension retirement plans, including gain-sharing and sustainable, responsible and environmentally sensitive economic development;
- public assistance to safeguard those who can not reasonably provide for themselves;
- maintaining an adequate ratio of low-income and disabled housing;
- unemployment and retraining benefits for workers laid off or locked out by employers;
- fair trade based on principles of sound environmental quality, welfare of the population, and workers' rights;
- access to affordable childcare.

We oppose:

- union busting right-to-work laws;
- tip credit as part of calculating minimum wage.

LAW & JUSTICE

We recognize that in the pursuit of civil order, we cannot abandon the legal principles upon which a free and democratic society relies. We affirm Liberty and Justice for everyone residing in the U.S. according to the Constitution and believe that criminal justice and human rights are linked.

We believe:

- violence should not become an accepted fact in our communities;
- authorities and communities must work together, assume responsibility for safety and prevention of crime, and make neighborhoods livable;
- government must help alleviate the social conditions which contribute to crime;
- comprehensive crime prevention must include youth programs;
- property forfeiture should be permitted only after criminal conviction;
- corporate officers and boards should be held responsible for actions and malfeasance of their companies;
- use of "Tazers" should be considered a use of extreme force.

We support:

- a citizen's constitutional right to own firearms and use them for legal purposes;
- combating drug addiction focusing on treatment and education;
- adequate state funding for indigent defendants in all criminal cases;

- timely DNA testing in criminal prosecutions;
- drug and family courts;
- elimination of racial profiling by government or law enforcement.

MILITARY

Democrats have always answered their country's call to duty and are proud of our military contributions to the nation.

We support:

- Fairchild AFB as an integral part of our community and our national defense;
- expanding coverage including comprehensive psychiatric services for veterans suffering from service-related disorders;
- preservation of VA hospitals and clinics;
- complete funding of all VA hospitals and medical treatment facilities for disabled veterans, and increased funding for long term care;
- restoration of full no-cost treatment at military medical facilities for military retirees;
- the right for service injuries to be declared after a term of service;
- equal compensation for Guard and Reserve members activated for combat operations;
- full instruction of all American personnel in the mission to which they are deployed;
- the rights of all persons serving in the military to serve free of sexual harassment and sexual assault;
- the right and responsibility of each woman in the military to make her own reproductive decisions and her right to follow through on those decisions at non-military medical facilities and at her own expense;

We oppose:

- Survivor's Benefit Plan (SBP) Social Security offset when a widowed military spouse reaches age= 62;
- the elimination of the VA disability offset from military retired pay;
- exclusion from service or discrimination in service based on sexual orientation.

TRANSPORTATION

We believe that transportation systems that are efficient, flexible and visionary are key to a healthy economy and environment.

We support:

- making investments in public infrastructure that broaden both rural and urban transportation choices and reduce dependence on the automobile;
- improved facilities and sidewalks for wheelchairs, pedestrians and non-motorized movement of people;
- maintenance and enhancement of heavy rail and slack-water navigation;
- public involvement at all levels in developing transportation plans and systems;

- multiple funding sources for essential transportation projects;
- tax credits given to vehicles that exceed gas mileage guidelines or use alternative fuels;
- use of alternative fuels, neighborhood electric and hybrid vehicles.

We oppose:

- major airport expansion without public input, review and vote;
- enhancement of arterials that encourages inappropriate land use and development;
- further erosion or abandonment of heavy rail infrastructure.