

## West Virginia State Democratic 2016 Party Platform

### Preamble

“If by Liberal they mean someone who looks ahead and not behind, someone who welcomes new ideas without rigid reactions, someone who cares about the welfare of the people--their health, their housing, their schools, their jobs, their civil rights, and their civil liberties--someone who believes we can break through the stalemate and suspicions that grip us in our policies abroad, if that is what they mean by a Liberal, then I'm proud to say I'm a Liberal.”

-President John F. Kennedy

President Kennedy went on to say that human dignity is the source of national purpose, that human liberty is the source of national action, that the human heart is the source of national compassion, and the human mind is the source of our invention and our ideas. Like President Kennedy, we believe liberalism is not so much a Party creed or set of fixed promises as it is an attitude of mind and heart, a faith in man's ability through the experiences of his reason and judgment to increase for himself and his fellow men the amount of justice and freedom and brotherhood which all human life deserves. Liberalism and Progressivism go hand in hand. The two are the basis of who we are as a Party. The two define everything we stand for, everything we strive for and everything we fight and will continue to fight for. It defines the great work that we and others like us, have accomplished throughout history. Since 2009, the Dow and S&P have increased significantly. Unemployment is consistently down. The number of uninsured adults has seen a dramatic decrease. The deficit is at 2.8% of GDP. Consumer confidence is at an all-time high. The United States is experiencing the longest consecutive period of private sector job growth in history.

“The sun doesn't always shine in West Virginia, but the people always do”

-President John F. Kennedy

## **A: Education**

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

### **A-1: Pre-K-12**

We support:

- a) Ensuring that every child has the skills necessary for postsecondary education and/or the world of work.
- b) Providing each child with the right to attend school in a safe, disciplined environment conducive to learning.
- c) Ensuring that every child comes to the classroom prepared and able to learn.
- d) Steps to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Every classroom should have a highly qualified and certified teacher.
- e) The belief that educators, parents, and the community should take ownership of their schools.
- f) Quality science, technology, engineering, arts, and math curriculum (STEAM approach) English and civics in every school.
- g) Low-cost, nutritional lunches for our students.
- h) Implementing programs to alleviate truancy and bullying.
- i) Expanding the innovative use of technology.
- j) Teachers in the classroom, but providing distance learning alternatives to ensure a challenging curriculum.
- k) The evaluation of schools by multiple measures, not just standardized test scores.
- l) Preschool programs to ensure that all children enter school with the same opportunities.
- m) After school programs to provide academic support and enrichment activities.
- n) Ensuring that state funding is used for public education, from pre-K to post secondary education.
- o) Smaller class sizes.
- p) Improved teacher education to address differences in student learning styles.
- q) Improved cooperation between teachers and health care providers for children with ADD and other learning problems.

## **A-2: Post Secondary Education**

We support:

- a). A focus by colleges on preparing students for a global economy.
- b) The right of every eligible West Virginian to obtain quality, accessible post-secondary training.
- c) Reducing the financial burden on students through continued support of the Promise Scholarship and reduction of student loan rates, with an eventual goal of free in-state tuition for all students at public colleges and universities in West Virginia.
- d) The Smart 529 program and other initiatives to make college affordable and accessible.
- e) Incentives for retaining professionals educated in West Virginia after graduation.

We recognize:

- a) The necessity of a strong community college system responsive to local business and industry needs.
- b) The need to support adult basic education as an alternative path to becoming an educated productive citizen.

## **A-3: Libraries**

We support:

- a) Funding for libraries because of their importance as a resource for lifelong learning.
- b) The availability of accessible technology for all citizens.
- c) 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 families in a progressive economy.

### **B-1: Keys to Building a Stronger Economy**

- a) Infrastructure: We believe that:
  - 1. A strong economy relies on good roads, bridges, water and sewer, utilities such as energy distribution, airports, waterways, broadband and ed internet and phone service. High-speed internet should be accessible, reliable and affordable state-wide.
  - 2. Federal, state, and local governments must invest in a quality infrastructure that enables us to build an economy that works for all.
  - 3. Taxpayer dollars must be used in an accountable way to fund vital projects to improve and regulate this infrastructure. Municipal and County ‘smart living’ planners should be supported as they seek revisions to state and local ordinances or laws to allow Accessory Dwelling Units or “Tiny Houses” to be built using traditional or new market building materials.
  - 4.
- b) Workforce Development: We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to acquire a good education and new skills, and to put those skills to work.
- c) Small Business: We believe that:
  - 1. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and we should encourage the entrepreneurial spirit.
  - 2. The gap should be bridged between government and small business through better communication about the many programs and services that are available.
- d) Business Climate: We believe that:
  - 1. It is essential to promote a positive image of the state.
  - 2. The state can help attract new business and aid existing employers while expecting them to be responsible corporate citizens.
  - 3. We must ensure that tax incentives are done in a responsible manner that maintains a sustainable tax base for our public schools and other essential services.

e) Agriculture and Forestry. We support:

1. Family farms producing locally grown foods.
2. Ensuring that West Virginia farmers have a strong safety net and that they can achieve profitability in the marketplace.
3. Incentives for farmers and foresters to use good conservation practices and sustainable farming methods.

f) Tourism We support the promotion and development of tourism in our state to further diversify our economy. Major tourism projects should be fully supported while discouraging practices that irrevocably damage the natural beauty and wildlife of our State's mountains, lakes and rivers of which we are so justifiably

g) Taxes: We support taxes that are fair, based on the ability to pay and preserving adequate after-tax spending power, and that decrease income equality.

## B-2: Employee Rights

### a) Workplace Safety

We believe that every working person has the right to a safe and Healthy workplace environment. Therefore, we urge the state to pass pertinent safety laws that would further protect West Virginia's entire workforce. Special care should be devoted to our state's coal miners to ensure their safety. Drug free workplaces should be a priority for the state.

### b) Bargaining Rights

We urge state and local officials to support collective bargaining for improved wages, benefits, and working conditions. We support making it easier for workers to join unions by fighting for the Employee Free Choice Act.

### c) Pensions/Retirement/Health Care

We believe that every working person should be able to retire without the worry that Social Security will be under-funded or eventually phased out. Pensions, health care, and other benefits earned on the job must be protected and guaranteed in retirement.

### d) Wages

We support:

1. A \$15 per hour minimum wage to afford all workers a better quality of life. No one who works forty hours per week should be living in poverty.
2. Indexing the minimum wage to inflation and the cost of living.
3. Equal pay for equal work.

### e) Safety Net (Unemployment Compensation)

We support:

- 1). Programs to protect, and provide a comfortable transition for working families in crisis.
  - 2) Repealing “Right to Work”
  - f) 3) Re-instating Prevailing Wage

### **B-3: Creating a Level Playing Field**

- a) Fair Trade

We 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.

We oppose TPP. Trade Agreements that include ISDS provisions that unfairly put corporate interests ahead of national or state law should be opposed. The excesses of Wall Street should be reined in to create a more fair economy that works for all by instituting a Financial Speculation Tax and ending “Too Big to Fail”.

- b) Outsourcing

We discourage the practice of outsourcing because it is detrimental to West Virginia working families. We support efforts to promote American and West Virginia made products.

- c) Consumer Protection

We support preserving, protecting and improving our civil justice system so that anyone who is harmed by the misconduct and negligence of others can obtain justice in our state’s courtrooms.

### **C–Law and Order**

The West Virginia State Democratic Party advocates faithful adherence to the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of West Virginia and the ideals set forth in these historic documents.

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#### **C-1: Right to Bear Arms**

We support the U.S. Constitution, including the Second Amendment — the right to bear arms. We support common sense proposals to curb firearm violence, including the understanding that certain locations and facilities must be firearm-free.

We support a requirement to have a permit in order to carry a concealed firearm.

#### **C-2: National Guard**

We support maintaining sufficient numbers and funding of National Guard personnel to protect citizens within the state. The preservation of their facilities and equipment stationed here should be a priority too.

### C-3: Incarceration

We support appropriate alternatives to incarceration, such as home confinement, drug courts, day report centers, and community based treatment should be pursued for non-violent offenders. We support banning for-profit prisons, an end to the “war on drugs” and the legalization of medical, recreational and industrial cannabis.

### C-4: Immigration

We support fair and humane immigration laws that are enforced to protect all residents of the State of West Virginia and the United States of America.

We support:

- 1) paving the way for a swift and fair legislative path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants
- 2) , enhancing access to justice and services, and reversing the criminalization of immigrants,
- 3) employing humanitarian efforts to reunite families separated by deportation
- 4) providing expansive relief to DREAMers.

### C-5: Role of Law Enforcement

We support our police forces and honor them for taking the risk to protect our safety.

We believe in supportive and transparent accountability processes.

We believe that all on duty police activity should be monitored through human and electronic means such as body, vehicle and office cameras. We believe police and public education should foster the belief that the police are a part of our communities and should curb any tendency toward militarism.

### C-6: Funding

We believe that adequate, sustained, and effective monitoring of funding for law enforcement, the judicial system, corrections, and legal-aid are necessary to maintain access to justice for all citizens.

C-7: Death Penalty We oppose the reinstatement of the death penalty.

### C-8: Affirmative Consent

We support defining “consent” as enthusiastic, conscious, and voluntary agreement to sexual activity. Consent must be ongoing and may be revoked at any time. The presence of a current or

past relationship does not mean consent, nor does silence or the lack of protest. Such language should be included in the laws of our state.

## **D–Good Government**

The Democratic Party stands for honest, open and fair government, of, for, and by the people. All elected officials must be held to a higher moral standard and be 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 by all elected officials.

D-2: Responsible, transparent, and accountable spending and balanced budgets from all West Virginia public servants..

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

D-4: Legal, clean elections with full disclosure of donors and spending is critical to an informed electorate to sustain our democracy.

We support:

1) eliminating super PACs and other outside spending abuses, enforcing campaign finance rules, restoring the full protection of the Voting Rights Act and overturning the “Citizens United” Supreme Court decision.

2) Adequate polling places, including more community-based (satellite) early voting locations, and access for the disabled are necessary to promote participation.

3) Improved public education about candidates running for office and the electoral process.

4) Better civics education and voter registration drives in high schools.

5) Placing a high priority on providing competitive salaries, benefits, and opportunities for all public employees and public servants.

5) Automatic voter registration for all eligible citizens of West Virginia when they come of age.

We oppose voter suppression efforts that make it unnecessarily difficult to vote, such as the so-called “voter ID laws.”

## **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 federal and state energy policies to combat increasingly serious environmental issues both globally and here at home. We recognize that climate change is real, is caused by human activity and is already

causing devastating problems in the United States and around the world. We support immediate action to stop and reverse the harmful effects of climate change.

#### E-1: Energy Independence

- a) We support energy independence, utilizing renewable energy in addition to fossil fuels in a way that will solidify and/or strengthen West Virginia's place in a 21st Century energy economy.
- b) We support responsible practices that respect mineral and property owners' rights.

#### E-2: Clean Air & Water

We support enforcement of the Clean Air & Water Acts to help preserve our environment. West Virginians have a right to safe drinking water and clean air to breathe.

#### E-3: Reclamation

- a) We believe that reclamation of mined areas should be complete and a high priority, promoting economic development, workforce revitalization, public health and emergency preparedness.
- b) We strongly support enforcement of regulations with regard to all extractive industries.

#### E-4: Clean Communities

We support and encourage efforts to reduce litter and encourage recycling, and recognize not only their environmental, but also their potential economic impact.

#### 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 citizens' health remains an urgent concern. West Virginia Democrats believe that government, at every level, should not interfere with an individual's or family's right to make a personal or medical decision.

#### F-1: Health

- a) We support the concept of a national health care system. It is a human right and should be guaranteed by enacting a for-all single payer healthcare system.
- b) We support changing the way health and welfare is viewed in West Virginia.
- c) We care about the physical, mental, and social health of all residents.
- d) We support the continued search for creative ways to improve health care quality.
- e) We support expansion of coverage to those with preexisting conditions, to allow children to stay on their parents insurance longer, to treat women equally, to cover mental illness, and to promote preventive care.

#### F-2: Health Care Delivery Systems



We commit to ensuring our citizens full access to quality health care professionals and facilities.

#### F-3: Social

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

b) We believe that public assistance should be available to all people in need.

#### F-4: Children and Families

a) We are committed to strengthening family life and, therefore support:

1. paid vacation time, family medical leave and sick days.
2. The right to safe, affordable, quality daycare/after-school care for children.
3. Enacting a universal child care program.
4. The rights of consumers to choose in-home care over institutional care.
5. Full funding of effective intervention services for families in crisis, (e.g, domestic violence).
6. An aggressive, effective, and fair child support collection system.
7. Where warranted, a safe and secure, monitored visitation and/or exchange site in each county.
8. Policies that Support for healthy child bearing, including policies that promote research, planning, and comprehensive family life education.
9. Programs that take a multi-faceted approach, starting early in life, to educating West Virginians on achieving healthy relationships and how to prevent unwanted pregnancies and STIs. We acknowledge that abstinence only programs do not work.
3. Laws, such as the "Violence Against Women Act," and programs to reduce and eliminate domestic violence.

#### F-5: Seniors

a) We recognize that senior citizens are an integral part of our society.

b) We are committed to helping seniors retain their independence, dignity, and standard of living.

c) We believe that senior centers across our state provide programs that are critical to the well-being of this valued population.

d) We are committed to finding and implementing solutions to critical issues facing the aging population, namely: health care, nutrition, exercise, transportation, housing, and fraudulent schemes.

e) We recommend an increase in geriatric education for medical students in all state medical schools.

f) Medicare and Social Security must be protected and adequately funded. Efforts to privatize them or convert them into vouchers should be opposed.

#### F-6: Health Education

We support a comprehensive health education program by:

1. Supporting wellness centers; well-lit and safe outdoor neighborhood playgrounds; and hiking, biking, and walking trails.
2. Restoring full school physical education programs that include nutrition, wellness, recess, and the promotion of an overall healthy lifestyle.
3. Supporting 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.

#### F-7: Civil Rights

We continue our leadership in championing the civil rights of all persons and support laws and policies that recognize the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all citizens by:

1. Dedicating ourselves to creating an environment in West Virginia that utilizes, respects and celebrates the cultural and social differences among our citizens.
2. Leading the fight to ensure no American suffers discrimination or deprivation of rights on the basis of race, gender, language, national origin, religion, age, military or veteran status, economic status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, or other characteristics irrelevant to ability.
3. Advocating that all citizens who desire to provide for themselves and their families should be allowed to work free from discrimination and should not lose their job based on any characteristic.
4. Affirming our support for equal rights for women, the Equal Rights Amendment, the full enforcement of all laws barring job discrimination, enforcement of equal pay for work of equal value and balanced appointments in hiring of women, minorities and the disabled to the positions of major responsibility.
5. Condemning bigotry of any kind and continuing to speak out in a unified voice against hatred and violence directed at any minority group.

#### F-8 Women's Health

The Democratic Party of West Virginia is concerned about the attacks on women's reproductive health and health services in the United States and West Virginia. Although we have made significant gains in women's health in West Virginia, much remains to be done to improve quality of care and access to comprehensive health services, including family planning. West Virginia women are among the most likely to die of heart disease or lung cancer to have diabetes and to be obese. Babies born in West Virginia are more likely to be premature and have low birth weight. Mothers are more likely to smoke during pregnancy. In West Virginia, lack of education and insurance coverage are directly related to women's non-use of preventative health services and poor health outcomes. West Virginia has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the nation. Teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school and their children are more likely to become teen parents, perpetuating poverty and educational challenges.

The Democratic Party of West Virginia supports improvements in health services that enhance the well-being of all females in West Virginia. Therefore, the Democratic Party of West Virginia will work to ensure that:

1. All women have access to the full range of affordable comprehensive health services, including family planning
2. All women have access to age-appropriate education regarding nutrition, exercise, preventative health practices, and reproductive health.
3. All women have access to quality health services including gynecology, obstetrics, certified nurse-midwife care and reproductive health.
4. All health decisions including reproductive health are made privately without interference by the government, insurance companies or employers.

#### F-9 Drug Policy

1. We support the immediate end to the incarceration of non-violent drug offenders.
2. We support the full funding of recovery and treatment programs for all residents battling addiction, including those incarcerated.
3. We support an overall strategy of harm reduction, a study of potential benefits of decriminalizing drug use in general, and a critical examination of the effects of drug prohibition on health, secondary crime and social debilitation among addicts.
4. We acknowledge the “War on Drugs” has not been effective and has claimed the lives of millions.

#### G–Veterans

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

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- a) We support the continued pursuit of policies that ensure the necessary funding of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the West Virginia Veterans Administration for the highest quality health care for the nation’s veterans.
- b) We support guaranteed funding for veterans’ programs now and in the future, making such funding a mandatory, rather than a discretionary, budget item to ensure viability from year to year.
- a) We believe that it is the responsibility of the United States and the State of West Virginia to provide accessible, quality care for service members who return home from military service on a daily basis.
- b) We support vigilance in ensuring that returning soldiers will receive quality care, not only for visible, physical wounds, but also for serious and debilitating mental wounds inflicted during service, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

- a) We believe it should be a priority to provide veterans with concurrent receipt, ending the unjust prohibition against veterans' receiving both disability and retirement benefits.
- b) We recognize the need to reform the Survivors Benefits Plan (SBP), which allows personnel to pay a monthly premium to ensure that their spouses receive an annuity in the event of their demise.
- c) We believe that veterans returning home, such as those from Iraq and Afghanistan must be supported.
- d) We support Education and job training initiatives, such as Helmets to Hardhats, for veterans.