

2016 Platform of The Democratic Party of Denver (Assembly approved March 26, 2016)

1. AGRICULTURE

We support farming and ranching as mainstays of the Colorado economy. We also urge an active link between urban and rural lifestyles, as an expression of the value we place on both communities. In particular,

1. We support policies that promote sustainable and low impact agriculture, including organic farming, dry land farming, and urban farming and gardening. We also favor local production, marketing, and consumption of food to the fullest extent possible.
2. We support crop insurance programs that mitigate against cyclical losses from natural causes. We oppose subsidies that artificially reduce prices on less nutritious food while increasing the cost of nutritious alternatives.
3. We support humane treatment of agricultural animals and encourage less dependence on factory farming.
4. We support reforms so that only actual operating farms are eligible to receive agricultural tax benefits.
5. We support research and programs to support healthy bee populations and their ecosystems.
6. We support the subsidy of urban farming cooperatives to bring better understanding of food and the provision of higher nutritional resources to poor and racially marginalized communities.

2. CIVIL RIGHTS

All persons residing in the United States deserve equal protection under the law regardless of their race, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, economic status, and disability. We believe in fairness, equal rights, equal opportunity, and being part of an inclusive society. Therefore:

1. We support the equal treatment of gay, lesbian bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals, including the right to adopt children and the right of same sex couples to marry, have hospital visitation rights and full access to insurance. We support the right of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals to identity documents that match their gender identity, and their ability to use facilities consistent with their gender identity in any public place.
2. We oppose all hate crimes and support legislation that facilitates the prosecution of hate crimes.
3. We support equal pay for work as emphasized in the Lilly Ledbetter Act.
4. We support the rights of disabled people as provided under Americans with Disabilities Act.
5. We support the fight against human trafficking.
6. We believe that the government has no legitimate authority without a warrant to intrude into the private lives of individuals.
7. We oppose indefinite detention of any person without due process.
8. We support religious freedom and support policies that ensure the full separation of church and state.

3. CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SECURITY

We believe that government must firmly support due process and the rule of law, protect the private choices of citizens, and provide safe communities that are free from violence. Everyone has a right to feel safe and secure in their home and neighborhood. We will continue to support those who protect and serve. We also believe that crime can be reduced through comprehensive prevention and rehabilitation programs. Therefore:

1. We support strong and fair penalties for violent crimes.

2. We speak out in a unified voice against hatred, racism, racial profiling, and violence directed against any group and support legal protections through “hate crime” legislation.
3. We support comprehensive social services and assistance for the victims of crime.
4. We support alternatives to incarceration for non-violent offenders.
5. We believe juvenile crime rates can be reduced by implementing anti-truancy measures, after-school programs, and restorative justice programs.
6. We salute the progress achieved in gun safety regulations passed by the state legislature and oppose any efforts to repeal the current laws. We promote responsible gun ownership, gun safety programs, and sporting associations, and also remain determined to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals. We strongly urge a comprehensive common sense ban on deadly assault weapons.
7. We support a ban on guns on college and university campuses, except for law enforcement and security personnel. We oppose any law that requires an educational, cultural or scientific institution or facility to permit the carrying of concealed weapons on their premises.
8. We seek to provide state-of-the-art equipment, including body cameras, and training for police officers and first responders. We support DNA and science-based verification systems.
9. We support the replacement of the death penalty with a term of permanent incarceration. We support a greater emphasis on rehabilitation and education in prisons.
10. We support ending mandatory and excessive sentencing.
11. We oppose private for-profit prisons.
12. We support juvenile court processing prior to juveniles being transferred to adult court.
13. We support the right of victims and their families to participate in the penalty phase and judgment hearings, and believe that parole hearings should be avoided when there is no chance of parole.
14. We oppose discrimination against the hiring of felons where Their conviction has no relevance.
15. We support current efforts to reduce the use of solitary confinement in Colorado prisons.
16. We support additional training for police officers with regards to juveniles and people with mental illness and mental impairments.
17. We support the end of mass incarceration strategies to reduce crime.
18. We support alternatives to incarceration for those who cannot pay fines.

4. DEMOCRACY

Constitutional civil, political, and religious rights belong to humans not to corporations. We believe that voting is a basic democratic right and call for campaign finance reform to restrict the role of large donations.

1. We believe that voting is a basic right and oppose any measures that decrease or inhibit access to voting and support extending voting rights by measures such as extensive early voting, mail-in ballots, same day registration, automatic voter registration, and making Election Day a national holiday.
2. We believe that rights recognized under the U.S. Constitution belong to human beings only, and that money is not protected speech. Corporations do not have Constitutional rights, but only those legal rights and responsibilities given to them by statute. We support legislation and/or constitutional amendments to reverse the effects of Citizens United and related cases.
3. We support public funding of political campaigns.
4. We support full disclosure of donors for all political issue spending and support tightening legislation and regulations to restrict political spending by 501(c) (4) and other tax-exempt organizations.
5. We advocate the inclusion of American government and civics in K-12 curriculum.

5. ECONOMY

We believe in a fair and vigorous economy that strengthens our country based on hard work and responsibility. We believe we are greater together than we are on our own. We support a role for government in spurring job creation; rebuilding infrastructure; investing in clean energy technology, scientific research, and education; and restoring fairness and opportunity to our country. Therefore:

1. We endorse an economic structure that maximizes opportunity for everyone, decreases inequality, and strengthens the middle class.
2. We support maintaining tax incentives for investment in renewable and sustainable energy and expanding loan guarantees to investments in energy efficiency.
3. We support more Wall Street reforms, pension protections, bank reforms, and full implementation of the Dodd Frank Act and similar legislation. We support re-adoption of the Glass-Steagall Act and rigorous enforcement of anti-trust legislation.
4. We support efforts to prevent home foreclosures, help stabilize the housing market, and keep people in their homes.
5. We call for more projects to repair and restore our infrastructure, support basic and applied research, and to address the energy and transportation needs of the future as a way to create more jobs and stimulate the economy.
6. We acknowledge the government's progress in reducing the deficit and call for further efforts to enhance revenue, including a progressive tax code that eliminates loopholes, and we support the earned income tax credit and increasing the rate on capital gains.
7. We believe that government has an important role in mitigating the effects of unemployment through education, retraining, extended unemployment insurance, healthcare for the unemployed and other support programs, as well as facilitating the move to self-sufficiency.
8. We believe public policy should encourage innovation, and support small business, entrepreneurship, and reenergize manufacturing.
9. We support worker/owner cooperatives where the employees also own and control the business.
10. We support the enactment of a Financial Transaction Tax on stocks, bonds, derivatives, and other security transactions.
11. We call for greater scrutiny and transparency of trade agreements to protect jobs and the environment and for reforming agreements to raise global labor and environmental standards.
12. We support net-neutrality and the free flow of information unrestricted by telecommunication corporations.
13. We support the regulation of high-speed internet as a public utility and critical infrastructure and support efforts to make fiber-optics connections available throughout the nation at a reasonable cost in order to bring the United States capacity to the standards of other developed countries.
14. We oppose the privatization of critical government services.
15. We support the protection of public and private pensions, but oppose the requirement that the postal service pre-pay into the retirement fund for its employees.
16. We oppose profit-shifting corporate tax avoidance and corporate inversion resulting from the off-shore incorporation of businesses carrying out their primary operations within the United States.
17. We support social safety net programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the National School Lunch Program.

6. EDUCATION

We call for an educational system, which is inclusive of our diverse population, guarantees funding as required by the Colorado Constitution, encourages community involvement. We must educate the whole individual through academic rigor, social and emotional skill development, athletic competition, artistic endeavor, and career and technical training. Public education is a right and we reject attempts to privatize or corporatize education in Denver.

1. We support the right of all children to attend high quality neighborhood schools.
2. We oppose vouchers and public funding of religious and other private schools, including privately run charter schools.
3. We support the full and equitable funding of public PS-12, as intended by Amendment 23 of the Colorado Constitution, and of higher education.
4. We support financial transparency for all school funding.
5. We support the reduction of class sizes in all primary grades with weighted formulas for staff allocation based on factors such as numbers of students on free and reduced lunches and children living in poverty.
6. We support education that emphasizes a comprehensive and expanded curriculum which includes science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, humanities, multiple languages, and also music, arts, and physical education. We support developmentally appropriate programs and curriculum as early as preschool.
7. We support funding nutritious school meal programs for children living in poverty.
8. We support equal access to appropriate high quality education for all challenged and special needs students.
9. We support increasing standards that allow our students to be able to compete in a global society at all levels of education, but oppose excessive testing.
10. We support enhanced focus on success for every student rather than the closure of neighborhood schools that are deemed to be failing.
11. We insist that all educational professionals earn a living wage, have the right to organize, and have access to mentoring and professional development to improve instructional skills and to expand cultural competence.
12. We support anti-bullying policies in schools, but reject strict adherence to zero tolerance and call for common sense, non-discriminatory school discipline.
13. We oppose the criminalization of student behaviors that can, and should, be managed by school staff and parental involvement. We especially oppose criminalization that discriminates across racial or ethnic lines.
14. We oppose school cultures that utilize "military style" student management and support behavior management which reflects an expectation of developmentally appropriate student behavior.
15. We support parental involvement in school activities and outreach programs by the schools toward that goal, especially for at-risk families.
16. We seek to minimize the employment of teachers, administrators and superintendents who do not meet the training and educational requirements for Colorado licensure and seek to minimize waivers of those requirements to supplant qualified teachers.
17. We support initiatives to increase the proportion of people of color as administrators, teachers, and staff.
18. We oppose administrative staffing ratios that are excessive in comparison to districts with comparable student numbers.
19. We support access to internet and computer technology equipment and instruction, especially for underserved students in poverty and those who are receiving free and reduced lunches in both rural and urban areas,
20. We support establishing campaign finance reforms for elected Board of Education Director positions, including aligning candidate reporting calendars to existing schedules to make public disclosure timely, and by establishing reasonable contribution limits as envisioned in the Colorado Constitution.
21. We support revision to the SPF (DPS-School Performance Framework) to better assist in accurately determining failing schools, and we support funding and programs for intensive training of administrators, principals, and teachers, within 18 months of such determination.
22. We support increased funding from the state to public institutions of higher learning.

7. ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Global climate change, pollution, population growth and consequent environmental problems pose an immediate threat to our survival. We believe that we must deal with these urgent issues now and pursue policies that maintain biodiversity, ecosystem integrity and the overall health of our planet. We support efforts to increase energy efficiency and conservation, increased utilization of renewable and green energy to reduce the use of fossil fuels, strict enforcement of critical environmental protection, and science-based policies that lead to a sustainable environment. Our public resources and lands must be preserved for future generations. State and local governments must manage growth, pollution, and the extraction of natural resources to protect the quality of life for their citizens and to protect the environment and other species. Therefore:

1. We support the protection of natural habitats and intact ecosystems through science-based management of public lands that promotes the optimal balance between human use and the natural world, with special attention paid to protection of threatened and endangered species.
2. We support programs and policies that encourage recycling, composting, and energy conservation. All levels of government should have energy efficiency policies that support advanced building design and construction standards.
3. Fossil fuels are finite, and their consumption contributes to climate change. Therefore we support a carbon fee or at least a cap and trade system to control pollutants and emissions.
4. We strongly endorse the transition to sustainable, renewable energy as quickly as possible, and therefore endorse incentives for the development of and reliance upon sustainable energy technologies, including the ability of individuals to benefit from local renewable energy capture through net metering.
5. We support an increased severance tax for natural resources extracted from all Colorado lands and call for a shorter grace period before taxes are collected on oil and gas extraction.
6. We support mandatory disclosure of the use and disposal of toxic materials to the appropriate authorities so that regulations can be fashioned and enforced in such a manner as to protect public health and the environment.
7. We support sensible regulation of oil and gas operations, developed through a transparent process with robust public involvement that provides strong protections for air and water quality and controls noise and light pollution.
8. We support requiring public participation in the full processes of the Colorado Brownfield Voluntary Cleanup Program, including public input into the cleanup process and standards.
9. We support public notice before commercial or governmental dispersal of pesticides.
10. Subsidies for non-renewable energy production should be eliminated.
11. Extraction industries must be required to provide financial assurances through security instruments adequate to fund complete safe closures and permanent environment reclamation for all operations in the event of insolvency or corporate collapse.

8. FOREIGN POLICY

We believe our foreign policy should reflect our highest principles of freedom, justice for all, equality, self-determination, human dignity, the rule of international law, and the principles stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore:

1. We oppose all forms of ethnic cleansing, genocide, apartheid and violent suppression of peaceful protests.
2. We support vigorous pursuit of diplomatic and multi-lateral initiatives to resolve conflicts, including the relentless pursuit of nuclear non-proliferation, elimination of chemical and biological weapons and land mine mitigation.

3. We oppose long-term commitments of the U.S. military in regions where our national security is not threatened. Economic reasons alone are not sufficient justification for military involvement.
4. We endorse protection of the nation as a priority, and support the use of effective, appropriate technologies and methods that do not impinge on civil liberties, and under no circumstances include torture.
5. We support decreased dependence on private contractors in pursuit of fulfilling our military missions.
6. We support efforts to close Guantanamo Bay detention center.
7. We oppose the proliferation of weapon sales to other nations.
8. We support détente with all willing non-allies.
9. We believe good faith diplomacy requires that coercion be used only as a measure of the last resort; further we believe building of partnerships and the relentless use of persuasion.

9. HEALTH CARE

We believe that health care is a right, not a privilege. We support public financing of health care for all. Our health system should focus proactively on wellness, public health, preventive medicine, disease prevention, and mental health, as well as primary care. Therefore:

1. We support the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and reject any efforts to defund or weaken the act.
2. We support adoption of the ColoradoCare constitutional amendment (Amendment 69) to offer affordable, universal health care for all residents of Colorado.
3. We oppose any efforts to reverse the expansion of Medicaid.
4. We support full access for family and reproductive health care, including all forms of contraception, and reject all efforts that would curtail a woman's right to choose.
5. We support transparency in billing as well as providing simple, understandable, and accurate estimates of all costs of medical procedures prior to the delivery of services.
6. We support paying for quality, not quantity, of health care by all payers.
7. We support better reporting on objective measures of health care quality and outcomes.
8. We support increased mental health services for families and individuals and better integration with comprehensive health care.
9. We support the right to die with dignity at a time and place of our choosing, with the guidance of a physician, when faced with terminal illness or degenerative disease.
10. We support efforts to create and implement national Universal Health Care.
11. Because gun violence is a public health issue, we support measures to decrease gun violence including federally funded research to support strategies to reduce firearm related injuries and deaths.
12. We support research programs to better understand racial disparities in health outcomes, including mortality and life expectancy.
13. We support protection from discrimination in insurance coverage and healthcare for transgender and gender nonconforming individuals, as well as full coverage of all transition-related care.

10. IMMIGRATION

We honor and defend the basic human rights of every person in the United States regardless of citizenship. As a nation of immigrants, we value the contributions of those from other lands and ethnic groups that have contributed to our national economic, intellectual, and cultural life. We welcome those who would like to become legal residents or citizens of the United States. We urge the enactment of comprehensive reforms to immigration laws. Therefore:

1. We support immigration law that protects against exploitation, values diversity, and provides the opportunity to earn citizenship.

2. We support keeping families together and oppose the incarceration and/or deportation by the ICE of undocumented parents who have minor children needing their care.
3. We support streamlining application for visas, work permits, and residency into a more rational, just, and humane process with substantial reductions in waiting time.
4. We support a simple, work visa program.
5. We endorse a path to citizenship, as envisioned by the proposed national DREAM Act, for long-time residents who have paid taxes, or defended our country in the armed forces, and have not been convicted of a felony.
6. We oppose legislation that changes unlawful entry into the United States from a petty offense to a felony.
7. We oppose any attempts to eliminate birthright citizenship guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.
8. We recognize the legitimate rights of refugees fleeing persecution, violence, and climate degradation.
9. We support a policy of adoption of refugees from war zones proportional to our national wealth.

11. LABOR

Workers are the foundation of a healthy society. We support the right to form unions, a living wage, guaranteed benefits, a healthy work environment, and equal pay for equal work. Therefore:

1. We support policies that establish a living wage for all workers and support vigorous enforcement of laws against all forms of wage theft.
2. We endorse government efforts to stimulate job creation in both the private and public sector.
3. We support ending tax incentives that encourage the export of U.S. jobs and support the institution of tax policies that bring manufacturing and other jobs back to the U.S.
4. We support buying U.S.-made goods.
5. We support enforcing our trade laws and trade adjustment assistance programs, which support workers who lose their jobs due to trade.
6. We recognize that government employees contribute meaningfully to our economy and support efforts to restore vital government jobs that provide important public services and sustain the livelihood of those who are employed in them.
7. We support the rights of employees to form unions and oppose "right to work" legislation. We also support strengthening laws that protect employees from intimidation, retribution, and termination of at will employees without due process.
8. We support the payment of extended unemployment benefits during times of high unemployment.
9. We support the elimination of the cap on income subject to social security taxes.
10. We support programs that assist parents or guardians with dependent children by including paid sick leave, flexible work hours and quality child care.
11. We support guaranteed benefits such as paid sick leave, vacation, workman's comp insurance, parental leave, and leave guaranteed by the Family Medical Leave Act.

12. LOCAL AFFAIRS

We support programs to promote affordable housing, end homelessness, provide adequate funding for emergency shelters and food, maintain parks and libraries, protect the historical character of local neighborhoods, and reduce housing segregation across racial and economic lines. We further call for a constitutional amendment to modify or eliminate the Taxpayer's Bill of Rights (TABOR). Therefore:

1. We support full funding of emergency shelter and food systems, and a vigorous program for assisting homeless and needy people to have productive lives.

2. We support programs to end homelessness, especially for families with children, veterans, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and people with mental illness; and oppose criminalization of resting in public places.
4. We support the use of local vendors and businesses.
5. We object to public policy that allows Denver neighborhoods to be turned into toxic waste disposal sites.
6. We support a state constitutional amendment modifying or eliminating the Taxpayers Bill of Rights (TABOR).
7. We support the determination, with public input, of which Denver park land, open space, trails, and public natural areas are to be designated and protected as Denver Parks. We recognize the right of Denver residents to vote on the disposal and/or privatization of designated Denver Parks.
8. We support programs that provide more affordable housing, keep people in their homes and allow neighborhoods to remain intact.
9. We support programs to reduce housing segregation across both racial and economic lines and we support neighborhood integration of low cost and public housing.

13. MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

We have a sacred trust to the men and women who have served and who continue to serve our country. Therefore, as an obligation to our veterans and their families:

1. We support additional resources to provide easy and efficient access to earned benefits for veterans and their families to health care, education, affordable housing, and job opportunities.
2. We support expanding opportunities for unemployed veterans and providing incentives to businesses to hire them.
3. We support efforts to eliminate sexual harassment in the military and call for complaints to be reported and resolved outside of the chain of command.
4. We support additional funding and resources for mental health services for both active military and veterans.
5. We support a speedy review of less than honorable discharges and denial of medical benefits.
6. We support full funding to complete construction of the new VA hospital in Aurora.
7. While recognizing the efforts of most VA employees to provide quality care for veterans, we call for a thorough review of management practices to root out the rampant cronyism, mismanagement and corruption, misallocation of resources and lack of accountability.
8. Whistle blowers in the military and VA system deserve full protection, including freedom from harassment.

14. SENIOR ISSUES

The senior population in Colorado will more than double by 2035. We must provide our seniors with good local and regional services and programs, which will require development long-term plans.

1. We support programs and services that enable seniors to remain independent in their homes longer, which will reduce the demand for expensive long-term institutional care.
2. We must fund more research into cures and treatment of Alzheimer's, dementia, osteoporosis, and other debilitating senior related medical conditions.
3. Social Security and Medicare remain the most effective programs to reduce senior poverty and must be strengthened and preserved. We support raising the Social Security tax salary cap.
4. Seniors must be protected from senior abuse.

15. SOCIAL EDUCATION IN RACE

Many of the problems in our society are directly related to the establishment of an underclass of people along racial lines, as direct and indirect results of the historical framework of white supremacy. Indeed the Democratic Party, like the rest of our Nation, has contributed in the past to this legacy in a way that we firmly reject today. While attempts to reverse the consequences of this history have been approached most often by viewing the issue in terms of helping people of color, we believe the greater need is to reverse the conscious and unconscious bias that persists as a root cause of racism. Therefore:

1. We call for education on race, ethnicity, and social position, appropriate to age development, in all grades of school.
2. We call for increasing opportunities for social contact across racial lines, through integrated activities in social and learning programs.
3. We call for the creation of programs encouraging institutions, such as churches, schools, and neighborhood organizations, to promote relationships and communication across racial lines.
4. We encourage colleges and universities in Denver and Colorado to provide education for recognizing and changing unconscious racial and ethnic biases, and to require proficiency in these areas for graduation in teacher education.

16. TRANSPORTATION

Denver and Colorado need a comprehensive affordable public multi-modal transit system that takes into consideration non-motorized transportation needs, transit oriented development, environmental and neighborhood impacts, neighborhoods with the greatest need for affordable public transportation and services to people with disabilities, including the blind and visually impaired and physically disabled. Therefore:

1. We support an emphasis on an affordable public, not private, transportation system.
2. We support continuation and expansion of the strategic build out of FasTracks.
3. We support an expedited statewide public transit system, including rail, in the north-south and east-west corridors.
4. We support additional accommodations for people with disabilities entering and departing the transit system at service points.
5. We support indexing transportation fuel taxes to inflation.

17. WATER

Because water is a critical issue in our arid climate, we support efforts to educate and inform the public about water issues. Policies must prioritize water conservation, management of limited water supplies, and the protection of water quality for humans and natural ecology. Riparian systems and wetlands are critical components in the complex web of sustainable, healthy ecosystems, and must be rigorously protected. We urge the maintenance of healthy rivers, streams, aquifers, and aquatic ecosystems. We support the preservation of minimum stream flows and support stream flow restoration efforts. Therefore:

1. We support urban conservation and improved water use efficiency.
2. We support requiring that new developments include long-term supplies of water.
3. We support improved agricultural water use efficiency and mechanisms such as reuse, leasing, and cooperative alliances aimed at avoiding permanent depletion of water.
4. We support full compliance and enforcement of the Clean Water Act, without exceptions for oil and gas production.
5. We support the enactment of stronger regulations and laws when existing laws do not adequately protect water quality, wetlands, and other aquatic ecosystems.
6. We support full disclosure by businesses and municipalities of all chemicals discharged or injected into groundwater or surface water and require storage facilities to be properly maintained.

7. We support maintenance and regular inspection of dams and other water infrastructures.