



PROPOSED PLATFORM OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ARKANSAS  
2018-2020

## PREAMBLE

At its best, America exists as a beacon to the world. Our Constitution safeguards individual liberties, establishes a vibrant democracy, and provides the foundations for a secure country that promotes the well-being of all Americans. Arkansas Democrats share these fundamental American principles and promote individual freedom, equality of opportunity, community empowerment, and democracy. All are essential if Arkansas is to reach its full potential.

A spirit of individualism is at the root of the success of the American experiment and has been a defining characteristic of Arkansas since the state's founding 182 years ago. That individual initiative generally works for the benefit of society as a whole. Our Party celebrates individual initiative and entrepreneurialism and balances those principles with the good of a community that cares for its most vulnerable members.

The Democratic Party is committed to equality of opportunity and tearing down legal barriers that treat individuals unfairly based upon their identities. Regardless of where you grew up, what race or gender you are, who you love, or what you believe; we are all Arkansans and Americans who deserve a fair shot in our state and country.

Democrats will enact policies that offer excellent and affordable education to all, provide every Arkansan with access to high-quality health care, and ensure access to affordable housing. Only with these basic rights will we see all Arkansans able to flourish in our state.

Arkansans have a responsibility to participate fully in their democracy in the voting booth and through using their constitutionally protected freedoms of speech and association to make their views on issues known to their fellow citizens and their elected officials. Government has a responsibility to serve the people of the state in an ethical, responsible manner through using their tax dollars wisely, valuing the input of all citizens, respecting citizens' civil liberties, and operating ethically. This combination of an engaged citizenry and a decent and dignified government will ensure the promotion of the common good.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas respects the diversity of opinions our members hold. While recognizing that there are some within our party who, for reasons of personal conscience, may disagree on some of the specific issues as stated within this platform, we recommend the following guided by these principles.

## DEMOCRACY

Arkansas Democrats will protect our democracy and demand the highest ethical standards in government. We believe in transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*, there is urgent need for campaign finance reform. Arkansas Democrats led efforts to make our elections more accountable to the people by passing a constitutional amendment prohibiting corporations from making campaign contributions. We believe all corporations should be prohibited from spending on any political campaign at any level. Arkansas Democrats will continue to develop and support transparency laws that will let Arkansans know the forces behind attempts to buy our elections.

Arkansas Democrats will cap the amount of money that the already rich can contribute to candidates. We are committed to further action to ensure that elections are funded in a fair and equitable way, and we call for an end to the campaign finance system currently at work that causes so many Arkansans to doubt the health of our democracy.

Gerrymandering has undermined our democracy, divided our communities, and decreased the ability of legislatures to compromise to produce positive legislation. Democrats support creating an independent redistricting commission that will draw fair districts that do not unnecessarily divide our communities.

Democrats believe every person's vote should be equal to every other person's vote in all elections. Moreover, Arkansas has not been a competitive state in nationwide elections for years, and presidential candidates routinely ignore our state and our voters. Arkansans deserve to have their voices heard, and Arkansas Democrats support consideration of a shift to a proportional way of allocating the state's electoral votes that will increase the influence of Arkansans when electing our president.

One of our most important civil rights is the right to vote. Generations of Arkansans fought to expand this most basic right of our democracy. Arkansas Democrats support efforts to make voting even more accessible to our citizens. Democrats support automatic and universal voter registration, voting by mail, making Election Day a state holiday, placing voting centers on college campuses, and other measures that increase turnout and strengthen our democracy are needed in our state and in our country.

Democrats are also committed to protecting voting rights. The Democratic Party opposes intrusive Arkansas voter identification laws. Supported by no evidence or facts, such efforts needlessly and egregiously disenfranchise Arkansans, including veterans, the poor, the elderly, students, and people of color. Such laws imposes unreasonable limitations on the right to vote, limitations that have an unjustifiable discriminatory impact.

Democracy depends on an informed citizenry, and Democrats will enact policies to promote robust independent and objective journalism.

## EDUCATION

Democrats are committed to making Arkansas a knowledge and educational hub for the 21st Century. The future of Arkansas demands that we hold education as our most important civic and economic development initiative. A world-class educational system—one that moves seamlessly from pre-kindergarten through adulthood—will make our democracy stronger and help develop jobs to make Arkansas competitive with other states and the world.

The Democratic Party believes all Arkansas children have the right to a high-quality education. Building on our investment in the education of our students, Democrats believe we must put policies in place that will result in graduates choosing to make their lives in Arkansas rather than moving elsewhere. Democrats believe that true commitment to high-quality education requires serious dedication, expectations, and funding.

Democrats will create universally accessible, high-quality pre-kindergarten. Students must have the opportunity to begin their education early, laying the foundation for a better-educated citizenry and workforce. Democrats believe quality pre-kindergarten has a positive ripple effect throughout our education system as a whole and the life of any single student. We are committed to making sure no four-year old will ever be placed on a waiting list for pre-K in Arkansas.

The success of our educational system hinges on our teachers. Teachers work hard to fulfill the sacred and vital role of helping our children learn skills and values needed to become effective citizens. We must recruit the best and brightest to the teaching profession, raise teacher pay, and demand quality instruction and work hard to retain talented classroom teachers. We support removing overbearing, bureaucratic reporting requirements in order to allow our teachers to spend more time focusing on improving in the classroom rather than managing them to success. We recognize that teachers need to be evaluated fairly and held accountable, and we support giving educators the support and professional development they need to be successful.

We must invest in those who are willing to take on the task of educating our next generation. In the short term, we support teaching in Arkansas's highest-need locations or highest-need subjects being incentivized with higher wages. Over time, we need to ensure the teaching profession provides more competitive wages that are commensurate with importance of job and the talent needed to do it well. Additionally, we support that teachers should be provided with quality, affordable health care options. The Democratic Party also recognizes the vital role education support professionals play in educating our children, and we must provide salaries and make sure benefits are available that recognize their worth.

The availability of high-quality teaching and the latest in education technology must be available ensured to students in all parts of the state. Arkansas Democrats will bring high-speed broadband to all Arkansas students, especially in rural areas.

We believe that Arkansans are best served by schools that inspire students to pursue the full range of academic inquiry that values and encourages creativity and critical thinking, a vibrant and vigorous curriculum, and practices not based solely on "teaching to the test."

High-quality afterschool and summer programs are powerful tools in helping to close the achievement gaps that we too often see in our state. These programs reinforce learning that happens during the school year, keep our young people safe, and aid working families, including low-income families, in the care of their children.

Arkansas Democrats believe that forcing school districts to rely on property tax revenue leads to gross disparities in rural and underserved communities. All our children, regardless of zip code, deserve a high-quality education and funding levels that make this a reality. We believe that public funds should be used only for public schools. Therefore, Democrats oppose the use of vouchers, as vouchers undermine public education.

The Democratic Party is committed to defending funding for traditional public schools. Democrats believe that charter schools must ensure equal access to all students and must not engage in any practices that disproportionately limit access to minority or low-income students. Charter schools must also be held to the same standards of accountability as traditional public schools. We believe that public schools in the form of charter schools must not be handed over to unaccountable corporations.

Parental involvement is a crucial determinant of an individual children's success in school. We advocate measures that will empower parents with the tools and the opportunity to be active, respected participants in the education of their children.

Democrats are committed to creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming school environment, a necessity for successful teaching and learning. Such an environment must be free of bullying. The Party believes our education system must ensure respect, discipline, and order in schools while also focusing on restorative disciplinary strategies.

Democrats are leading efforts to establish statewide best practices for students with disabilities. The Democratic Party is committed to providing high-quality special education and ensuring that students with disabilities have the skills necessary to transition into the working world upon completion of their schooling.

So that they may learn to their full potential, it is crucial that students come to school healthy and ready to learn. We advocate implementing an integrated school health system so that health coverage of our youth can be increased. It is crucial that every student in the state have consistent access to a mental health professional and a trained nurse in their school environment. Democrats recognize that food insecurity has a negative impact on students' health, well-being, and success in school. The Democratic Party supports comprehensive school nutrition programs. Arkansas Democrats support accessibility of public school students to comprehensive, accurate, age-appropriate sex education, including information to help stem the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and prevent teen pregnancy.

Arkansans must have access to post-high school opportunities, whether college, career-technical training, community college, AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, or the military. Arkansas Democrats believe access to post-high school opportunities must be more accessible and affordable. Every student who wants to attend college or participate in post-high school training opportunities should be able to do so regardless of zip code or economic status. Democrats are committed to maintaining and expanding scholarship programs that provide students with opportunities to pursue college and careers after high school and encourage talented Arkansans to make their lives in Arkansas.

Democrats believe a serious commitment to higher education requires funding from the state. By adequately and equitably funding our universities and community colleges, we drive down tuition costs, increase access for all students, and strengthen Arkansas's workforce for a 21st Century economy.

Democrats believe that students should not have to incur massive debt in exchange for post-high school training or education. Burdening young adults with massive debt harms their chances at success and does irreparable damage to our economy. Democrats are committed to student debt relief. Students should have the ability to refinance their student loans, and students who dedicate their working lives to public service should have their debt forgiven.

The Democratic Party supports the Arkansas DREAM Act. It is wrong to force young people who have lived in our state for years and graduated from our high schools to pay out-of-state tuition rates simply because of their legal status. The Arkansas DREAM Act would allow these students to pay in-state tuition prices at our public colleges and universities.

An educated and well-trained populace is essential for the state to compete for higher-paying jobs. Many adults lack the necessary literacy skills, and a significant number of adults in our communities desire to enhance their reading and write in their native language and to learn English as a second language. Adult literacy services and instruction on other skills are provided by a network of county-level literacy councils and libraries. Whether developing skills to

succeed in school, looking for a job, exploring possible careers, having a baby, or planning retirement, our citizens turn to libraries to help them lead better lives. Democrats support libraries and programs for adult literacy, education, and life skills.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

Gainful and productive employment is the cornerstone of the Arkansas economy, and Arkansas Democrats honor the hard work of workers and responsible actions of businesses, especially small businesses, that together create jobs and grow our economy. Key to a healthy economy is a healthy, educated, empowered, and financially secure workforce, which creates an environment where business can thrive and produce jobs that secure a strong middle class.

The Democratic Party is committed to policies that promote and reward responsible business growth and benefit workers and their families throughout the state with well-paying jobs. We support the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively without fear of intimidation. Democrats do not believe in corporate welfare. We oppose plots by Republican politicians to take your hard-earned dollars and give them to the richest corporations. We do not support rewarding companies that ship American jobs overseas with special tax breaks and loopholes. We encourage companies to create jobs here in Arkansas and support policies that promote job growth in Arkansas and American-made products. Moreover, on state-funded building projects, an advantage should be given to contractors who commit to hiring Arkansas workers.

Arkansas Democrats believe severe economic and income inequality is hurting Arkansas families and brings immense danger to our country. Democrats believe working families should be supported by fair compensation through a living wage and access to benefits. The Party believes Arkansas workers deserve a raise. Consistent with our values, the Democratic Party successfully led efforts to raise the minimum wage in 2014. Democrats believe it is time to raise the minimum wage to \$12 per hour by 2022 and tie any raise to inflation to ensure that all Arkansas workers are fairly compensated.

Each region of our great state should benefit from Arkansas's business-friendly climate and should be supported in accordance with its specific needs for economic development, job creation, and an enhanced quality of life. We will fight to provide economic opportunities for all regions of our state, especially the Arkansas Delta.

Responsible business growth will require expanding entrepreneurship, developing our existing businesses, recruiting new business, funding the state's infrastructure, and increasing higher education and other postsecondary opportunities and programs.

Democrats support innovative programs to provide opportunities for good-paying jobs to Arkansans. Arkansas Democrats support programs that will keep young Arkansans in our state and attract young people from around the country to make their homes in the Natural State. Democrats will create tax incentives for millennials to choose Arkansas and provide stipends and low-interest loans for young people starting businesses and creating jobs in Arkansas.

As high-paying jobs increasingly come from technology fields, Democrats will improve and expand broadband across every corner of the state to provide high-wage opportunities to Arkansans. Arkansas has a critical need for technology jobs, and Democrats will fill these jobs with Arkansans who have been trained in these fields. Democrats will protect broadband access by restoring net neutrality.

The Party calls for an end to discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity in employment and business. Arkansas Democrats will not tolerate sexual harassment in the workplace. Democrats advocate that the state meet or exceed its present goal of increased business opportunities for women, minorities, and veterans. The Democratic Party supports policies that create equal opportunities for all Arkansans. Women have the right to the same pay as men when performing comparable work. The Party supports equal pay for equal work for all. Democrats believe it is crucial that families have access to paid parental leave upon the birth or adoption of a child.

A stronger economy is possible only when Arkansans have opportunities to enjoy the fruits of their labor and tend to themselves and their families when sick. Therefore, all working Arkansans should have access to paid vacation and sick leave.

## AGRICULTURE

The Democratic Party of Arkansas recognizes the importance of a strong farm economy to the citizens of Arkansas and that farming families are vital to supporting our state's economy. Agriculture makes up 25 percent of Arkansas's economy and provides one of every five jobs in our state. The Party believes our state and nation are best served when the agriculture sector is based on a family-farm system. A federal Farm Bill is a key part of ensuring Arkansas's farming families receive the support they need. Democrats firmly believe our congressional delegation must fight for a Farm Bill that works for all Arkansas farmers and promotes our rural economy.

We recognize that farmers and ranchers, as long-time stewards of the land, enhance the stability and entrepreneurial vitality of our rural economy. We strongly support the development and implementation of federal farm and fair trade policy that benefits all farmers.

We support a farm policy that embodies a safety net concept. This net serves as a tool that will allow our efficient, productive farmers to weather the financial hardship caused by economic and natural disasters. The Democratic Party of Arkansas believes a healthy farm economy will result in environmental and economic benefits important to our entire state.

Democrats recognize the need for a coherent and strong national and international farm policy that encourages the expansion of exports of Arkansas agricultural products in the global market. In a world in which the need for renewable energy sources is growing each day, biofuels derived from natural products like those grown in the fields of Arkansas have great potential for enlarging Arkansas's agricultural economy. Democrats support efforts toward these goals.

### TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The development of a strong system of transportation infrastructure—in the form of ports, bridges, highways, airports, and rail—is crucial to prepare us for the economic challenges of the 21st Century. Good roads improve interstate and intrastate commerce, build tourism, shorten the distance between families and friends, strengthen public safety, and enhance our overall quality of life. We must look to responsible and prudent highway financing programs to meet the ever-changing needs of our state and take into account local communities' thoughts and wishes. The Democratic Party believes the state government should be aggressive in developing plans for infrastructure projects that will benefit rural and underserved communities as well as the urban and suburban centers of the state.

In an era of increasing fuel costs and environmental threats from climate change, creativity in the development of transportation programs, including mass transit and trail systems, that do not rely solely on fossil fuels and traditional passenger automobiles should be encouraged.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas supports the development of high-speed internet networks to all homes and businesses so that everyone, especially rural and underserved areas, can access, upload, and download content at high speeds and fully participate in e-commerce. We support increased consumer choice through the encouragement of expanded competition in areas that are served by a single internet service provider. Democrats believe that all parts of rural Arkansas also deserve access to reliable cell coverage.

### ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Arkansas is the Natural State, and it must remain that way. The Democratic Party of Arkansas believes that we should look for balance in encouraging commerce to fairly and sustainably reap

the benefits of our natural resources while preserving and restoring the condition of those resources. Arkansas can benefit from developing a green economy. This new industry can simultaneously provide jobs in every area of the state that cannot be outsourced and will allow us to leave the Natural State in a better condition than we received it, a legacy to future generations.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas accepts the scientific evidence that global climate change is caused by carbon pollution and linked to more chaotic and extreme weather phenomena. Global climate change poses a danger for the entire planet and human race, causing rising sea levels and the potential for dramatic upheaval. Climate change threatens our way of life in Arkansas, holding the potential to devastate our agricultural sector, drive up costs for the basic necessities of life, and fundamentally alter our state's treasured, scenic wilderness and plentiful hunting and fishing opportunities. Arkansas Democrats are committed to solutions that combat global climate change.

Arkansas faces other environmental challenges, such as wetlands conservation, forestry management, protection of public waters, recycling procedures, sustainable agricultural methods, the overuse of fossil fuels, and other conditions which cause air and water pollution. As we develop commercial waterways and permit industrial facilities, we must protect and sustain the hunting, fishing, and recreational areas that are wonders and economic drivers for our state. In particular, we must fight to ensure that the unique Buffalo River, the nation's first national river, is maintained for the enjoyment for its visitors.

The Democratic Party believes that the exploration of independent, renewable energy sources, especially biodiesel, solar, wind, and other fuels, should be encouraged and promoted. In particular, a shift to increased usage of clean energy presents a unique opportunity for Arkansas. Arkansas Democrats support policies that will put our colleges and universities at the forefront of developing safe, profitable, clean energy, leading to beneficial effects on our environment, agriculture, jobs, and the economy.

## HEALTH CARE

The Democratic Party is dedicated to guaranteeing health care for all Arkansans and to bringing down the costs for families and businesses.

Democrats will improve the quality of health care in our state. We support policies that lower health care costs for all Arkansans, guarantee access to health care for all, improve our hospitals, and ensure that the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences is a world leader in delivering health care and in research.

Arkansas Democrats led the way in creating “the Private Option.” This version of Medicaid expansion saves over 1,000 lives a year and provides over a quarter million Arkansans with access to health insurance. The Private Option has strengthened our hospitals across the State, especially in rural areas, ensuring that all Arkansans have access to health care. The Democratic Party supports the continued funding of the Private Option because it is critical for individuals and families and the economy of our state, particularly in rural communities. In addition to saving rural hospitals, the Private Option continues to lower health care costs, save jobs, keep health centers open, encourage competition in the insurance marketplace, and prevent a tax increase on Arkansas business.

Democrats believe that health care must be made more affordable and accessible to all Arkansans. Working families must be able to continue to receive health insurance when they change jobs or when someone in their family gets sick. We are dedicated to expanding health coverage for those without access to high quality, affordable health care. We believe in providing encouragement and assistance to small businesses to offer health insurance to their workers at a reasonable price. Democrats support making Medicare and Medicaid available to all Arkansans. Any citizen who would like to avoid the struggles and chaos of private insurance should have the right to access Medicare or Medicaid coverage. This Public Option will provide Arkansans with all medical, dental, and nursing care. Everyone, rich or poor, man, woman, or child, can use it or any part of it. It is not a charity, and it will relieve your money worries in times of illness.

The Democratic Party supports programs to expand and improve rural and underserved areas. We acknowledge and are committed to vastly decreasing the disparities in our health care system, especially in rural and underserved areas of our state.

Patients suffering with a variety of severe health issues, including HIV/AIDS and cancer, find that medical cannabis relieves their symptoms, often when nothing else offers relief. Therefore, the Democratic Party of Arkansas supports the development of a responsible medical marijuana program that provides patients in need of such relief the freedom to access this remedy. Despite the clear will of Arkansas voters in 2016 to provide medical marijuana as an option for these patients, Republican government officials’ inability to effectively manage government has delayed implementation of this important program.

We support the creation of paid leave programs to help Arkansas families. The Democratic Party believes workers should not have to leave a seriously ill family member or a newborn baby behind because they cannot afford to miss a paycheck. Paid parental leave is linked to lower infant mortality rates and better health for both infants and mothers. Family-friendly policies, such as paid annual, sick, and parental leave, result in economic benefits to employers, including improved recruitment, retention, and morale of employees. Providing paid family leave will make Arkansas a more attractive place to work and raise a family.

Our party supports providing pregnant workers with a right to reasonable accommodations. Although many women can continue working safely throughout their pregnancies without the need for any modification to their jobs, some women find that at some point during pregnancy particular job activities, such as lifting, bending, or standing for long periods, may begin to pose a challenge. Many women could continue to work without risk to themselves or their pregnancies with slight job modifications. Without accommodations, women may face an impossible choice between the health of their pregnancies and their jobs. We believe that no woman should have to choose between the health of her pregnancy and her paycheck.

Health education is vital to the future of better care in Arkansas. We support furthering existing health literacy campaigns that are focused on preventive care and will reduce overall health care costs in Arkansas. The Democratic Party supports creating new health literacy campaigns and research aimed at preventing future problems in public health.

Arkansas Democrats are committed to eradicating the scourge of lead poisoning and other pollutants that have a detrimental effect on the health of Arkansans and can lead to rises in disease, crime, and other ills.

The Democratic Party supports programs that recognize the right of Arkansans with disabilities to obtain health care that allows them to be as integrated as possible into their communities and jobs. Arkansas must enact the Community First Choice Option, which will provide people with disabilities greater access to being served in their communities and reduce the waitlist for such services, help balance the budget, and will not raise taxes.

Democrats believe we must treat mental health issues with the same care and seriousness that we treat issues of physical health and support a robust mental health workforce. Recognizing that maintaining good mental health is critical to all people, we will work with health professionals to ensure that all Arkansans have access to mental health care. Democrats are leading the effort to expand community-based treatment for substance abuse disorders and mental health conditions.

We must confront the epidemic of drug and alcohol addiction, specifically the opioid crisis, by expanding access to prevention and treatment, supporting recovery, and helping community organizations. The Democratic Party is committed to assisting the thousands of people struggling with addiction in our state to find and sustain healthy lives by encouraging full recovery and integration into society and working to remove common barriers to gainful employment, housing, and education. Those individuals, as well as the economy of Arkansas's communities, will benefit from such efforts. We will continue to fight to expand access to care for addiction services, and ensure that insurance coverage is equal to that for any other health conditions.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that all Arkansans have the opportunity to access high quality, affordable, and confidential health care, regardless of their location or economic status and without requiring guardian, judicial, parental, or spousal consent or notification.

## SOCIAL SECURITY, MEDICARE, MEDICAID

Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid are all Democratic creations. The Democratic Party of Arkansas continues its longtime support for these programs that have meant so much to us as a people.

As a record number of Arkansans have health insurance, many still struggle to afford the prescription drugs necessary to live a meaningful life. While Arkansans struggle to pay for life-saving medications, the pharmaceutical industry continues to smash previous profit records. The Democratic Party pledges to challenge Big Pharma and pass legislation to make prescription drugs more affordable for everyone.

Medicare and Social Security are promises made by one generation to the next. Seniors who have worked their whole lives and paid into Medicare and Social Security deserve the retirement security these earned benefits provide. We oppose any steps to turn Medicare over to insurance companies or Social Security over to Wall Street and oppose raising the retirement eligibility to age 70. The DPA considers such steps a breach of the promises of Medicare and Social Security.

We oppose cuts in state and federal programs for public health and well-being, especially to provide tax cuts to America's wealthiest citizens. We urge that state and federal budgets be prioritized to avoid detrimental cuts to Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and veterans' programs. We recognize that Medicaid provides life-sustaining coverage for many who are seriously disabled and in need of costly, ongoing care, and we will continue funding Medicaid.

## TAXES

Arkansans deserve fair taxes. The tax code created by Republican politicians is rigged to rob the middle class and working families and gives your hard-earned dollars to the already rich. For the same tax rate to apply to a family making \$34,000 and an already rich individual making \$3 million is wrong. Republican politicians have passed laws that allow the already rich to hoard their wealth even in death by giving money to their heirs. Democrats believe that the flurry of Republican giveaways and tax cuts to the already rich threatens all Arkansans.

Democrats will bring tax policy that is fair to working families, puts more money in the pockets of middle and working class Arkansans, and maintains a balanced state budget while protecting essential state services such as education, Medicaid, and public safety. Democrats will create an Earned Income Tax Credit and further reduce sales taxes on groceries, efforts which promise to create a fairer Arkansas tax system. Democrats will enact an inheritance tax on the already rich that guarantees that all Arkansans will have a level playing field instead of giving just the children of the already rich an unfair advantage.

We must adequately balance revenues and essential state services. Arkansas Democrats believe fair tax cuts can be matched to economic growth so that they do not threaten vitally important state services. In the face of very challenging times, Arkansas Democrats have, across the decades, responsibly balanced the state budget and continued to provide services necessary to for the people of our state. Democrats will continue to be good stewards of our tax dollars as we respond to the needs of our state and promote the middle class.

#### OUR MILITARY, OUR VETERANS, AND OUR NATION'S SECURITY

We believe that the peace and prosperity of our nation is protected by the maintenance of a powerful and capable military. We believe the single most important element in our military is the individual soldier, sailor, marine, and airman, and it is absolutely critical that we support those who defend us.

Since 9/11, many veterans, including those in the National Guard and Reservists, have served multiple deployments. To honor the men and women who serve our country, state and federal policy should demonstrate respect for the sacrifices made by military veterans and their families by ensuring a smooth transition from military to civilian life and providing benefits to honor their service. The Democratic Party of Arkansas supports funding to make sure our stated commitments to veterans are honored by our actions, not merely by our words.

We support the continuation and enhancement of veterans benefits, including post-military training, access to higher education, medical care, increased access to mental health services, and disability benefits. The Democratic Party supports placing outpatient clinics in rural and underserved areas as a means of providing access to health programs for veterans and their families. Democrats call for enforcement of laws guaranteeing returning service members the right to return to their previous jobs without delay or loss of seniority. Arkansas Democrats demand interstate cooperation to enable the successful transition of families forced to move from one place to another, including changes involving public education, job searches, and health care.

Arkansas should demonstrate its support for veterans and military families and communities. We support policies that require accountability for the oversight of federal and state sponsored homes for veterans, and we demand that in the event of closure of such facilities, all due respect must be given to honoring the wishes of the veterans affected. Democrats insist that our military members on active duty and in the Reserve receive fair pay and allowances. Democrats demand that elected officials review present benefits and determine how they can be enhanced.

Veterans have sacrificed to make sure we are secure in America. Veterans deserve housing and should not be homeless in the land they served to protect. The Democratic Party will work to put in place and implement policies to address homelessness among our veterans and to make sure no veteran has to live a life of homelessness.

We believe in maintaining a strong military. In a complex world, our Nation's security depends on the wise and deliberate use of diplomacy and adherence to a foreign policy that views war as the last resort.

## JUSTICE

Citizens must be allowed to live, work, and play safely. The Democratic Party of Arkansas supports a justice system that is fair, timely, and properly punishes those convicted of crimes. Democrats believe that lifting people out of poverty with opportunity, education, and jobs is the best long-term strategy for deterring crime. We respect the daily sacrifices made by those who protect us and provide order. While those who commit crimes must be held responsible for those offenses, we advocate restorative justice programs dedicated to rehabilitation and alternative sentencing and effective reentry policies so that anyone convicted of a crime many have the opportunity to become or return to being fully productive contributors to society with the economic benefits that arise from that.

The Democratic Party believes in effective, smart responses to crime. To that end, Democrats support evidence-based policies that save taxpayers' money while punishing but rehabilitating some nonviolent offenders in a manner that has a proven record of success. Arkansas Democrats know that the war on drugs has largely been a failure, resulting in millions of people being imprisoned unnecessarily, doing little to nothing to stop drug addiction, and has cost the taxpaying Americans billions of dollars. Addiction should be seen first and foremost as a health care crisis rather than a criminal justice issue. As such, Arkansas Democrats support efforts to bring safety to our community by limiting imprisonment of people addicted to drugs and directing them instead to treatment programs.

Moreover, Democrats support lessening penalties for personal use of marijuana and ending the practice of incarcerating Americans for simple possession of limited amounts of cannabis. Our party also recognizes that legalization of small amounts of marijuana for personal use is quite likely in our state. Planning for that future, Democrats endorse a study of how to move forward with the regulated cultivation and sale of recreational marijuana and a taxation plan that will benefit the state.

Democrats believe our communities are safer when law enforcement and the people they serve work together. Building and maintaining community trust is the cornerstone of effective policing. We believe it is on all of us to speak out about disparities in our criminal justice system, just as it is on all of us to stand up for those who put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities.

Our party will always act in the best interest of victims, communities, taxpayers, and especially on behalf of women, children and families. Domestic violence affects women, children, and families in a particularly egregious manner. Democrats support policies and practices that stop domestic violence and make our homes safer places. We support the Violence Against Women Act as a key component for making Arkansas a safer place for women, and we steadfastly oppose any effort to water down or repeal the Violence Against Women Act. Democrats support the state's Domestic Peace Fund and will provide law enforcement with better training, more tools, and adequate resources.

Arkansas Democrats will fight to end institutional and systemic racism. Democrats will promote racial justice through fair, just, and equitable governing. Democrats believe there is no place for racism in our country. Democrats are committed to reforming our criminal justice system and ending mass incarceration. Something is profoundly wrong when almost a quarter of the world's prison population is in the United States, even though our country has less than five percent of the world's population. We will reform mandatory minimum sentences and close private prisons and detention centers. Research and evidence, rather than slogans and sound bites, must guide criminal justice policies.

Democrats will work with police to invest in training for officers on issues such as de-escalation and the creation of guidelines for the appropriate use of force. We encourage better police-community relations, requiring the use of body cameras, and stopping the use of weapons of war that have no place in our communities. We will end racial profiling that targets individuals solely on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin, which is un-American and counterproductive.

Democrats believe in supporting our law enforcement and pooling Arkansas's safety resources in a collaborative effort to protect children by keeping online predators off the Internet and educating children, parents, and teachers about online abuse and the value of online safety.

The juvenile justice system in Arkansas is broken. Thousands of children have been taken away from their parents and locked in dilapidated facilities, where many are abused, traumatized, and deprived of access to adequate educational opportunities. Still other parents see their children taken away from them simply for going to court and asking for help through the Families in Need of Services (FINS) process. Arkansas Democrats will reform juvenile justice and FINS by investing in community resources that will keep children with their families, save the taxpayers' millions of dollars, and lead to safer communities throughout the State.

Our party opposes the scourge of human trafficking. We support strengthening and making laws that punish perpetrators and empower victims to be a part of the fight against human trafficking.

Our Arkansas Constitution provides that "Every person is entitled to a certain remedy in the laws for all injuries or wrongs he may receive in his person, property or character; he ought to obtain justice freely, and without purchase; completely, and without denial; promptly and without delay; conformably to the laws." The Democratic Party of Arkansas opposes any and all limits on complete justice and rejects attempts to protect certain wrongdoers at the expense of those injured by their wrongs.

## RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES

The Democratic Party of Arkansas has been prominent in empowering all Arkansans. Democrats recognize that simply removing legal barriers to inequitable treatment does not rectify time-hardened patterns of social inequality and inequitable institutional practices. In keeping with the progress and expansion of civil rights and liberties in our state and across the nation, we pledge to continue our fight against discrimination or deprivation of rights on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, gender identity, disability, or any other characteristic unrelated to ability.

Arkansas Democrats support the movement to add prohibitions on discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to our state Civil Rights Act. Democrats support marriage equality.

Democrats will enact landlord-tenant reform that guarantees protections for tenants, including ensuring the habitability of rental housing, and ends the practice of jailing tenants for making late rental payments.

We reaffirm the constitutionally established right of privacy and choice. We pledge to defend the rights laid out in *Roe v. Wade*. We trust women to make their own decisions about their bodies and their health care. Democrats believe that women should have access to affordable birth control. Arkansas' maternal mortality rate is nearly twice the national rate, and Democrats believe that all women have the right to affordable health care before, during, and after their pregnancies.

We recognize that freedom and protection from violence or abuse, domestic and otherwise, is a fundamental human right.

The Democratic Party supports equal pay for men and women. We reject institutional barriers, be they corporate or governmental, which do not allow full access to job opportunities based on race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or socioeconomic status.

Arkansans are known for their welcoming nature and hospitality, and Arkansas Democrats believe that we must welcome the stranger. Our nation is a country of immigrants, enriched and made whole by diversity. Immigration reform that recognizes the strength that immigrants bring to our country while maintaining manageable levels of immigration is needed. We advocate for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level that restores the rule of law, enhances the security of America, and recognizes the importance of family unity. Arkansas Democrats support state laws that are practical and humane in their approach toward undocumented individuals already in Arkansas. We oppose Arkansas counties' participation in Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Far too many African-Americans and Latino-Americans face a daily struggle for respect, recognition, and safety. The Arkansas Democratic Party commits to leading the charge in promoting policies and fostering a culture that make our country safe for all persons of color..

The Democratic Party of Arkansas recognizes that the freedom to exercise one's religion is a vital component of the liberties held by Americans. Democrats recognize that individual and group prayer in schools is legal, while upholding the Constitution. However, we believe that laws couched as promoting religious liberty should not be used as a tool to allow and encourage discrimination against other Arkansans.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas supports the right to bear arms as set forth in the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Democrats also believe that all Arkansans should be able to work, learn, worship, and play without fear of gun violence, so are committed to pursuing common sense regulations that provide for the safety of our communities while maintaining our Second Amendment rights.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas supports the fundamental principles of the Equal Rights Amendment and supports the ratification of the federal Equal Rights Amendment by the Arkansas Legislature. We believe all citizens, women as well as men, deserve to be included in their country's constitution with all its legal rights and protections.

### PUBLIC SERVICE

The Democratic Party of Arkansas believes that individual involvement is vital to the health of our democracy. Arkansans have a responsibility to participate fully in their democracy in the voting booth and through using their constitutionally protected freedoms of speech and association. We encourage all Arkansans to take an active role in civic and social affairs through any combination of military service, public service, political participation, community engagement, and volunteerism.

Government has a responsibility to serve the people of Arkansas in a responsible manner, valuing the input of all, respecting civil liberties, and operating ethically. As such, acts of public corruption by any state or local official should be met with zero tolerance and aggressive prosecution. State government has a responsibility to use tax dollars wisely, always recognizing that the buildings and lands of the state are owned by the people rather than those who happen to be in power at a given moment. The combination of an engaged public and a responsive, fair-minded government will ensure the promotion of the common good.

If elected, Democrats will work tirelessly to enact the policies and values listed above. Arkansas Democrats know that these policies and values, when put in place in a spirit of cooperation with all, will result in better lives for all Arkansans.