



## **2005 PLATFORM**

### **PREAMBLE**

As the oldest continuous political party in the world, the Democratic Party has carried out its commitment to freedom, fairness, human rights, and responsible government for over 200 years. We pledge to continue this tradition.

We take pride in our Democratic heritage as a party of spiritual and patriotic values; a party of inclusiveness; a party of diversity; a party of compassion; a party of educational and economic opportunities; a party of social justice; and a party of responsible leadership.

This Party fully supports the Bill of Rights.

This party shall provide an avenue for the free and open expression of diverse ideas and opinions, including the right of every person to dissent, and shall work to promote government which is responsive to the legitimate needs, interests, and aspirations of every man, woman, and child in a manner which does not diminish human dignity or those fundamental rights, which are the birthright of all people of a free and democratic nation.

We, as North Carolina Democrats, seize this agenda, and vigilantly defend our historic Democratic heritage. We shall not abdicate our historical role as the party of action and the party of progress in this State. The lives and the livelihoods of the people of this State are our sacred trust. We must act decisively; we must act swiftly; we must act together.

### **AGRICULTURE**

Farming is important to all North Carolinians, and we respect the contributions made by farmers and agribusiness to our economy and our way of life. A sound farm economy supports rural economic development, provides thousands of jobs on and off the farm, and keeps food prices reasonably low for all of us.

We recognize that our agricultural economy is evolving. We support efforts that will aid our farmers in adjusting to these changes in a manner that will allow them to continue to increase efficiency, productivity, and profitability.

**SUPPORT FOR FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS:** This party pledges its support for farmers and farm workers. Growing, harvesting, selling, processing and transporting

agricultural goods and products have been a way of life for North Carolinians for generations. We pledge our support for increased agricultural research and education, and expanded government efforts to develop regional, statewide, and international markets for our farm products. We also support environmentally safe and economically viable means of animal waste disposal, and cooperation to prevent the conversion of prime farmland to non-farming uses. Our party believes that the provision of transitional support (such as retraining) for those individuals adversely affected by societal and economic changes impacting this industry is vital to the American way of life. We believe the values of the small family farm are what made North Carolina great.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Our future as a State and nation depends upon the daily assumption of personal responsibility by millions of Americans from all walks of life -- for the religious faiths they follow, the ethics they practice, the values they instill, the pride they take in their work, and the families they build. We Democrats strongly support the American family and policies that strengthen it.

A family – whether it has one or more caregivers – raises children, not the government. Caregivers have a responsibility to raise those children responsibly and teach them values, motivation, and discipline. To that end, we as Democrats pledge our steadfast commitment to all efforts to improve the lives of Tar Heel children and families. These efforts includes measures to reduce teenage pregnancy, infant mortality, and domestic violence; to create and sustain a safe, nurturing and stable child care system accessible to more families; to encourage adoption and foster child programs; to improve youth advocacy in our courts and in our communities; and, to promote responsible parenting and family preservation programs.

We believe Social Security is not just a contract for our senior citizens; it is also a safety net for our families, particularly dependent children, widows, widowers, and the disabled. That contract should never be compromised. We oppose privatization and the diversion of Social Security funds for other purposes.

## CIVIL JUSTICE

We believe that an efficient civil justice system is necessary to maintain a stable business environment, to promote social order, and to protect individual rights.

**ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION:** We support continued efforts to develop appropriate alternative methods of dispute resolution including court-ordered mediation and non-binding arbitration. We oppose any measures that deprive individuals and businesses of full and equal access to the civil justice system.

**RIGHT TO JURY:** We believe that right to a trial by jury in criminal and civil matters is essential to justice and fundamental to democracy. We oppose arbitrary caps on jury awards for the victims of negligence.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

The North Carolina Democratic Party urges government agencies to continue their efforts to protect consumers and to promote confidence in a fair marketplace that is free from price fixing, unfair restraints of trade, deception, fraud, and other abuses of the free enterprise system.

**INSURANCE RATES:** We oppose unfair discrimination in either rates or access for all forms of insurance. We North Carolina Democrats stand for the guarantees of affordable insurance rates and that affordable insurance will be widely available, while respecting claimants' rights to fair compensation for injury and loss.

**LENDING:** We encourage banks, savings and loans, and other financial service institutions to maintain high quality service at a reasonable cost for all consumers. We oppose predatory lending practices.

**PRE-EMPTION:** We support State efforts to fight against any federal pre-emption laws enacted to protect North Carolina consumers.

**UTILITY RATES:** We support essential utilities being available at reasonable rates.

**DO NOT CALL REGISTRY:** We support continuing all efforts to protect our citizens from unwanted telephone solicitations and scam artists.

**IDENTITY THEFT/COMPUTER VIRUSES:** We support North Carolina's leadership role in fighting Identity Theft, the fastest growing crime in the country. We consider computer viruses as assaults on our property and our privacy, and believe such actions must be prosecuted fully.

**SECURITIES REGULATION:** We believe North Carolinians should be able to have confidence in the safety of their securities investments. The investing public should be protected from securities. We Democrats believe in fair business practices with appropriate and honest public disclosure for stockholders.

**COUNTERFEIT TRADE GOODS:** We stand for firm enforcement of the laws against illegal counterfeit trademarked goods. Those goods often create health and safety issues for the consuming public. These counterfeit trademarked products also deprive N.C. manufacturers of jobs, create unfair competition for honest merchants, prevent the collection of government tax revenue and often constitute the "cash economy" for terrorists and other organized crime.

**PRICE FIXING/GOUGING:** We Democrats have never supported price fixing or price gouging, actions that often occur in times of emergency. Given the skyrocketing price of fuel, we shall take every step to protect consumers and businesses alike.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The North Carolina Democratic Party believes that every person should be safe from crime. We also believe that crime is prevented not only through swift punishment for lawbreakers, but also by rearing children in loving, stable families that teach moral values and by having social, educational, and economic systems that give our people a sense of hope and community.

**CAPITAL PUNISHMENT:** In granting to our government the power to take the lives of individuals convicted of capital offenses, we have given it the most far-reaching power that can be bestowed upon any government. For this reason, we support both stronger due process safeguards and efforts in the application of the ultimate power. With the advent of enhanced technology we believe it is incumbent for the State to use it so that no innocent person is mistakenly put to death by the State or wrongfully imprisoned. We believe that neither a victim's nor a perpetrator's race, sex, or economic status should be a factor in sentencing or execution in North Carolina.

**HATE CRIMES:** We support increased penalties for violent crimes motivated solely by hatred towards the victim's race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, political beliefs, or sexual orientation.

**VICTIMS' RIGHTS:** We believe that the effect of crime on victims should be considered in imposing punishment, that restitution should be required where possible, and that appropriate services to victims should be available.

**PRISONS/PRISONERS:** We support efforts to relieve prison overcrowding, including efforts to fund additional facilities and to find effective alternatives to incarceration. We oppose the privatization of prisons. Inmates should work hard to earn their keep and learn the values of hard work, respect, discipline, and teamwork. We support efforts to achieve that goal, including making sure every able-bodied prisoner is participating in work or education programs, learning a trade or getting a diploma, and to making sure prisoners do not return to a life of crime when they are released.

**YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS:** The rise in juvenile crime, including gang violence, is an alarming trend that must be reversed. We support the implementation of appropriate alternative sentencing programs designed to turn around troubled youths.

**GUN SAFETY:** We support efforts to increase safety and education in the handling and ownership of firearms. Furthermore, we avidly support strict enforcement of the Brady law.

## DRUGS AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

The abuse of drugs and alcohol drains our State of the creativity, energy, and vitality we need for continued progress. We believe that efforts to reduce the demand for drugs and alcohol should be a major focus of our State's anti-drug strategy. We believe that law enforcement plays a crucial role in stemming the use of illegal drugs, and that both courts and police agencies should be given the support and resources they need to fight this battle. To that end, we enthusiastically support family, neighborhood, and school-based programs aimed at turning young people away from the use of illegal drugs and alcohol. We support the efforts of State and local law-enforcement agencies to deal severely with drug trafficking and alcohol-impaired driving, and we call for effective sentences for repeat drug and alcohol offenders. We also call for strong State support of treatment facilities and halfway houses for drug and alcohol abusers to help break the cycle of addiction. Rehabilitation is also a concept we firmly believe in.

## ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The health of our State and of our nation depends on sustainable balanced growth. We believe that economic growth expands opportunity for everyone. The free market, regulated in the public interest, is the best engine of general prosperity. The federal government must balance the budget, pay the national debt to generate economic growth, and make prosperity achievable for all.

We also recognize that excellence in public education, including public schools, community colleges and universities, is the cornerstone of a successful economic development effort.

**HELPING OUR WORKFORCE:** We Democrats believe in protecting our State's workforce and encouraging assistance for workers, job creation, new investment in hard hit areas, and leveling the trade playing field for North Carolina industries.

**GLOBAL ECONOMY:** Our workers are among the most skilled and productive in the world. We support trade practices and economic policies that enable our workers and the businesses that employ them to compete effectively and fairly in the world market, without injury by our own federal trade policies.

**INDUSTRIAL RECRUITMENT:** We believe North Carolina must continue to attract and foster both new and traditional industries while encouraging growth from within the State. We support continued efforts to provide a skilled and educated workforce, a solid infrastructure, and a quality of life that attracts and creates good new jobs to provide a higher standard of living for all North Carolinians. We support efforts that continue to make North Carolina's business climate competitive, especially industrial recruitment in our low-wealth communities.

**SMALL BUSINESS:** We believe innovation and risk-taking in the pursuit of excellence should be rewarded. We support expanded government efforts to promote entrepreneurship and to help small businesses grow and prosper. We support efforts to provide tax and other incentives such as health care credits to existing small businesses to

expand their operations in North Carolina. North Carolina Democrats believe that small business development in North Carolina is the best use of tax breaks and other support programs because small businesses are the backbone of our economy.

**NATURAL RESOURCES:** We recognize that the wise stewardship of our natural resources is essential for our continued economic growth. For example, tourism, one of the State's fastest growing industries, depends upon the presence of clean and maintained beaches, unspoiled forests, and clean rivers and lakes.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL SECURITY

We believe government must provide a safety net covering the basic human needs of all citizens and should work to enrich their quality of life. To fulfill this responsibility, all persons should have the opportunity to develop their talents and abilities. We believe that every North Carolinian should have adequate food, clothing, shelter, health care, and work. We believe that we, as a society, have a responsibility to help those persons in need: distressed families, the unemployed, the homeless, persons with disabilities, and the mentally ill. We should eradicate hunger. No person should go to bed hungry.

**JOB:** We believe that all North Carolinians deserve rewarding jobs through which they can support themselves and their families. We believe that business, government, and employees, working together as partners, can strike a healthy balance in which the whole State can prosper.

**INCOME SUPPORT:** We believe ill, elderly, or disabled people should be able to enjoy the greatest possible independence and economic security. We endorse increases in income support programs, including unemployment benefits, Social Security, veterans' benefits, and retirement programs. We will not tolerate fraud, abuse, or mismanagement that destroy public trust in these programs and diminish their intended purposes. We support paying all workers a livable wage.

**FINANCIAL LITERACY:** We believe that all families deserve the opportunity to learn the skills needed to budget their resources prudently, to use credit wisely, and to save and invest for life goals of home ownership, providing for the education of children, and securing a financially strong retirement.

## EDUCATION

North Carolinians have a right to a quality education. Our State must have an outstanding educational system in order to produce an informed community, to promote economic development, and to build for an economic future characterized by high-skill, high-wage employment. We agree with Thomas Jefferson in that "any nation which expects to remain both ignorant and free expects that which never has been nor ever shall be."

We should strive for educational excellence for all persons, regardless of their race, age, gender, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic status, developmental disability, primary language, location, or station in life.

We should make sure that every North Carolinian is guaranteed a full and unfettered opportunity to develop his or her abilities to the greatest possible extent and that all of our people have access to lifelong educational opportunities. We continue to support efforts to raise academic standards and close achievement gaps for all North Carolinians.

We recognize the many outstanding public and private schools, colleges, and universities that already exist in our State and believe that these institutions should be held up as models for others to admire and emulate.

We endorse the continued election of the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the enactment of legislation making the Superintendent of Public Instruction the Chair of the State Board of Education.

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS:** We support superior educational opportunities for all North Carolina children, including efforts to reduce class size in the early grades, and increased support for home-to-school transition programs such as Head Start and Smart Start. We support emphasizing the fundamental skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic while exposing children to innovative ideas, information about other cultures, and advancement in technology. We applaud the teaching of effective citizenship, civic involvement, and legal and social responsibility. We believe that every child in North Carolina should have equal access to all educational opportunities. We support the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* and believe that racial segregation of our schools is incompatible with equal opportunity for all. We support adequate funding for construction and maintenance of school facilities. Additionally, we support adequate funding for equipment and support services for at risk students and for after school programs in our public schools. We oppose any under funded or unfunded federal mandates. All children have the right to a public education that respects their religious freedom and traditions.

**EDUCATIONAL REFORM:** Education must be in a continuous state of reform in order to permit our students to remain competitive in a changing world and to ensure that our public education system is accountable to the parents, students, taxpayers, and communities it serves. We encourage and support the efforts of school systems to promote and maintain diversity. We support the continued decentralization of decision making in our public school system so that educators will have the flexibility to adapt and react to changing circumstances without undue bureaucratic interference. Local parents, teachers, and administrators deserve a stronger voice in the establishment of educational priorities.

**PRESCHOOL AND AT-RISK CHILDREN:** We support the principles behind Head Start, Smart Start and More at Four programs: Our young deserve the tools they need for success in school and in life.

**SCHOOL VOUCHERS:** We oppose the implementation of private and religious school voucher programs. Such a program would amount to "welfare for the rich" in many instances. Such a program would also harm our public schools by diluting the financial support for those institutions and encouraging students to abandon the public school system. Consistent with our unequivocal support for the public school system, we cannot support a voucher program that will harm our public schools.

**HIGHER EDUCATION/UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES:** North Carolina's universities have achieved an international reputation for excellence in many fields. We wish to preserve this important part of our State's educational environment. Consequently, we support adequate funding for our public university system, the preservation of academic freedom at those institutions, equal access for all North Carolinians, maintaining low tuition for in-state students and the availability of financial aid for all qualified students with low and moderate incomes.

**HIGHER EDUCATION/COMMUNITY COLLEGES:** North Carolina's community colleges – begun by and fostered by North Carolina Democrats - play a vital role in enhancing the lives of our people and in paving the way for a brighter future for our State. We support adequate funding for all community college programs, including basic literacy programs, technical and vocational programs, new and expanded industrial training, small business centers, and occupational retraining.

**COMMUNITY COLLEGES/VOCATIONAL EDUCATION:** We support the establishment of a 4-year residential post-high school high-tech academy under the jurisdiction of N.C. State University as an important initiative to prepare a skilled workforce for the future.

**TEACHERS:** We believe good teachers - including college and university professors, instructors, and licensed classroom professionals - are among North Carolina's most valuable resources. We support continued efforts to produce, recruit, and retain highly qualified educators at all levels to ensure that our citizens receive an outstanding education. The way in which we compensate our educators should reflect our respect for the teaching profession. We support proposals to improve professionals' salaries and working conditions within the schools. We recognize diversity in our society and believe our educational systems should reflect and honor that diversity, and to provide appropriate role models for our students.

**SCHOOL SAFETY:** We believe that every child and educator has a right to be safe when attending school.

## **EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT**

We believe that the mission of government is to expand opportunity, not bureaucracy, to our culturally and ethnically diverse population. Democrats have demonstrated that

government can be both responsive and responsible. Under Democratic leadership, our State has enjoyed growth and progress while balancing the budget every year. We support continuing efforts to make State government more efficient.

**GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND EMPLOYMENT:** We have a strong commitment to our government employees. We believe these professionals deserve fair wages and benefits comparable to those in the private sector. We support annual pay raises within the limits of fiscal responsibility. Annual pay increases will retain the best and brightest employees in government. To avoid inequities in pay, North Carolina should recognize experience and service in the form of an annual base pay compensation increase. This will prevent the hiring of new employees at the same or a higher rate of pay than current employees who may not have received a base pay increase for some time. We support continued training of government officials, elected and professionals.

We further support efforts to increase the numbers of qualified women and minorities in all levels of government where they are under-represented. We oppose any discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation in the hiring, firing or promotion of public employees.

The purpose of the public retirement system is to recruit and retain competent employees and to help provide economic security in retirement. We support maintaining a sound and fiscally responsible retirement system for all public employees.

**OPEN GOVERNMENT:** The government belongs to the people of North Carolina. Its people are entitled to observe its work.

**RECORDS ACCESSIBILITY:** We believe that State government must be more accountable to the people of this great State through greater transparency in how government business is transacted. We firmly believe that personal information contained on the North Carolina government computer systems must remain secure and confidential.

## ENVIRONMENT

We recommit ourselves to the wise stewardship and protection of our air, water, soil, forests, wetlands, watersheds, and barrier islands. We seek to promote, via tax incentives and subsidies, the research and implementation of alternative, sustainable, and renewable energy solutions. We believe that by preserving our natural resources, we are preserving our quality of life, our economic growth, and our health. We note that the Democratic Party is the only party that has consistently supported serious and effective measures to protect our environment and natural resources.

We recognize the interdependence of ecosystems and community economies and believe that all communities have a fiduciary obligation to use land and resources in ways that do not harm the environmental health or the economies of neighboring or distant towns and communities.

**AIR, SOIL AND WATER:** We support tax incentives and other benefits that encourage use of alternative means for disposal of chemicals and waste by-products into the atmosphere, soil, and waters.

We believe in keeping public ownership of the coastline, so it is available to every North Carolinian.

We encourage regional watershed planning that encompasses agricultural activities, industrial output, and wastewater discharge, but that takes into account the interests of private property. We oppose Republican initiatives to dilute water and air quality safeguard standards, most especially in initiatives with titles intended to mislead the public.

**FORESTS:** We support logging and timber management techniques that foster reforestation. We oppose the practice of clear-cutting.

**WETLANDS:** We support local land management that includes responsible control of surface water run-off, requires the proper treatment and disposal of wastewater, and minimizes the pressure exerted by increased population. We support programs that will achieve the short-term goal of "no net loss" of wetlands - in both acreage and function - and a longer-term goal of wetlands restoration. We support the Ecosystem Enhancement Project that protects our wetlands and makes highway development more efficient.

**RECYCLING:** We support mandatory local and regional recycling of paper, glass, metals, plastics and other reusable materials in order to reduce the need for landfills. We support safe, alternative means of waste disposal. We also support tax incentives and other benefits for industries that undertake and promote recycling efforts, with a goal toward zero waste.

**OFFSHORE DRILLING:** We recognize that our coast is an outstanding natural resource that must be protected for future generations of North Carolinians. We call for the performance of a full environmental impact study including the impact on the tourism and fishing industry before any offshore exploration for oil or natural gas is undertaken.

**NUCLEAR POWER:** We urge constant vigilance to ensure the safety and security of existing nuclear power facilities and the development of efficient and safer means to dispose of nuclear and hazardous wastes.

**ALTERNATIVE FUELS:** To reduce fossil fuel dependency and to increase fuel efficiency standards, we urge cooperation in the private and public sectors to seek and develop alternative sources of energy.

**TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS WASTE:** We believe that any firm or organization - public or private - which uses or produces hazardous products must be held accountable for their safe and proper disposal. We support strengthening laws against irresponsible dumping of

toxic chemicals and wastes, and aggressive prosecution of those who violate these laws. We oppose the siting of hazardous waste generating and disposal facilities in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. We support reasonable right-to-know laws to disclose fully the chemicals used and stored in our communities.

**PARKS:** We support the completion of the remaining land acquisition needed to implement the master plan for our State parks. We oppose the sale of State parks. We also believe in accessible and affordable parks.

## FAIR AND OPEN ELECTIONS AND A STRONG PARTY

As the party of inclusion we recommit ourselves to a North Carolina Democratic Party that is open to all people. We believe the principles and goals of our party are more important than personalities or primary election disagreements. We expect Democratic candidates and those who have been entrusted with public or party office to set an example of loyalty to the party, to its principles, and to all of its nominees. We encourage all Democrats to unite and support the entire ticket in the General Election. We encourage Democrats to support the North Carolina Democratic Party in every race, from local contests, to judicial elections to the top of the ticket.

We pledge to continue efforts to involve as many people as possible in Democratic Party affairs and in party decision making. We will increase efforts to encourage historically under-represented groups, such as women and minorities, to seek election to public office.

**CAMPAIGNS:** We shall vigorously fight for what we believe in. Not inconsistent with that pledge is our promise to campaign honestly and fairly, with a focus on the issues of paramount concern to our communities, State, and nation.

**VOTING:** We will continue to advocate measures to make voter registration and voting easier and more accessible, particularly for students, seniors, the infirm, and those who are unable to register during business hours. We support increased funding to educate voters about legal alternatives to voting only on Election Day and to improve the speed and convenience of voting on Election Day. We support greater enforcement efforts to eliminate voter fraud. However, elections officials shall immediately inform all individuals denied their ability to vote their right to cast a provisional ballot.

We vigorously affirm our support for efforts to ensure the right to vote for all citizens without discrimination or intimidation. We also encourage efforts to increase the Election Day turnout of North Carolina's voting-age population.

We strongly support voting equipment, machines, mechanisms, and procedures that create and preserve auditable paper documentation of all votes cast.

**JUDICIAL SELECTION:** We support a judicial selection process that focuses on experience and qualifications, and enables qualified candidates for judicial positions to compete in a manner consistent with the Canons of Judicial Conduct.

**CAMPAIGN FINANCE:** We support tough campaign finance laws. The North Carolina Democratic Party will continue to support measures to reduce the cost of campaigning for public office. We encourage all North Carolina Democrats to participate in the income tax check-off fund.

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

We recognize that every person is entitled to basic health care, regardless of income or geographic location.

**HEALTH CARE:** We encourage healthy lifestyles. The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission must target critical health care issues such as teen smoking and youth obesity. These health care issues, often linked to juvenile diabetes, cancer, strokes and other heart ailments, cost taxpayers an estimated \$6 billion in medical costs and associated costs.

We recognize that health care decisions are best made within the context of the healthcare provider and patient relationship. Thus, we believe that each person has the right to choose his or her own physician without interference from government or insurance companies. We support health care reform that provides universal and portable coverage, expanded preventive health care, and public efforts to provide the prenatal care needed to reduce infant mortality.

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE:** We support a mental health system that provides access to appropriate treatment for mental, behavioral, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse. Such a system must provide a comprehensive array of services that emphasizes community-based treatment offering equal access for those in need. We support reform that emphasizes insurance coverage for all health disorders, including mental disorders.

**WELFARE REFORM:** We believe that welfare is intended to help families and individuals through extremely tough financial times. We support continued efforts to reform North Carolina's welfare system by emphasizing work, personal responsibility, and helping more welfare recipients to get effective job training get jobs and become self-sufficient.

**SENIORS AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES:** We support alternative healthcare delivery systems to allow the elderly and persons with disabilities to remain in a home setting as long as possible. We insist on their protection from abuse, neglect, and deprivation of their rights as persons. We applaud efforts to provide State-supported health care to the poor and to uninsured and underinsured persons.

**WOMEN:** We believe that every woman should have access to prenatal and postnatal care and appropriate counseling, as well as access to information and counseling regarding all choices related to pregnancies. We believe that a woman's decisions regarding pregnancy should be her own and not that of the government. Furthermore, abortion must be safe, legal, and accessible to all North Carolina women.

**PATIENTS' RIGHTS:** We North Carolina Democrats authored and continue to support the Patients' Bill of Rights, established to improve the relationship between patients, doctors and insurance companies.

**EDUCATION:** We support educational programs in our schools and public health agencies that encourage abstinence and provide information about safe sexual practices, in order to prevent pregnancy and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.

**BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH:** We support the increasing leadership role of North Carolina's biomedical researchers in exploring medical advances that will benefit all humanity. Recognizing the critical role that stem cell research can play in addressing diabetes, various cancers, spinal cord injuries, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and many other afflictions, we encourage an increased level of support for stem cell research with appropriate ethical controls.

## HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The North Carolina Democratic Party recognizes the importance of cultural development in the growth of our State. We are proud of all of our State's diverse cultures and heritages that have contributed to our rich history and continue those contributions to society today. We support the provision of services that respect the cultures and languages of all North Carolina residents. We strongly support the multicultural programs and institutions that have established our State's stature in the areas of the arts, theater, music, folk life and historic preservation. We encourage the continued development of museums and historical research facilities to embrace the cultural diversity of our State. We support public libraries, acknowledge their value as community resources and information centers, encourage continued support for their growth and expansion, and support their independence in providing knowledge and information.

## HOUSING

Safe, decent, and affordable housing for all persons is essential to the future of our communities and families. We deplore the conditions that lead to homelessness, and we encourage the renovation, preservation, and expansion of existing housing for persons with low-incomes. We believe in equal housing opportunities for all North Carolinians. We support policies that encourage affordable mortgage credit to make home ownership

possible for more working families. We also support the expansion of incentives for first-time homebuyers. We believe public housing should provide a safety net for our poorest and most vulnerable families. North Carolina Democrats believe in providing resources for special need populations - including farm workers, transitional housing for the homeless and incarcerated, HIV/AIDS populations, victims of domestic violence, homeless veterans, and those that are mentally or physically challenged and the elderly.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

The North Carolina Democratic Party was founded in response to the need for a defense of human rights and civil liberties. We reaffirm our commitment to the full and equal protection of the lives, liberties, rights, and properties of all citizens and residents of North Carolina. All human beings deserve the opportunity to realize their own potential. We support the provisions of the Geneva Convention, and believe any American departure from it undermines our moral standing in the world, thereby threatening our soldiers and citizens abroad.

**PRIVACY:** We continue to support responsible measures to limit the amount of information gathered by governmental agencies about individuals and to prohibit the use of such information in an improper manner. Government must respect individual liberties and refrain from intruding into our private lives and interfering with our personal decisions.

**CIVIL LIBERTIES:** We support the fundamental rights to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of association and assembly and the right not to be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. We oppose efforts to limit or eliminate these fundamental constitutional rights. We believe that all persons should have access to our courts.

**DISCRIMINATION:** We oppose discrimination of any kind, whether in employment, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, veteran status, religious affiliation, spiritual beliefs, health care, education, retirement programs, housing, or any other area. We encourage vigorous enforcement of existing civil rights laws and a periodic re-examination of their adequacy.

## IMMIGRATION

Immigrants are a vital part of North Carolina's progress. We believe the State should provide access to important information about State services and benefits in the primary language of legal immigrants but with a goal toward English proficiency.

While we recognize that immigration laws are enacted at the federal level, State government, grassroots citizens, and legislators can impact such policies by influencing our federal representatives. We strongly oppose the presence and impact of illegal or undocumented non-citizens in our State. We also believe the North Carolina Department

of Justice should swiftly prosecute persons who intentionally hire undocumented workers in this State, or persons who aid and abet that process.

## LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT

The North Carolina Democratic Party is the party of North Carolina's working people. We understand that meaningful employment at a living wage is critical to the personal security and self-esteem of the people of our State. We believe that economic growth is fully consistent with fair employment practices, fair wages, and a safe, clean, and healthy work place.

We are confident that maintaining a high level of economic growth can and should be accompanied by investments in the training and retraining of workers in view of our changing State, national, and world economies. In light of all these factors, we reaffirm our fundamental and well-established belief that all North Carolinians have a right to productive employment in a safe environment and to compensation at a living wage without fear of discriminatory treatment.

**JOB SAFETY/ILLNESS AND INJURY:** We demand strict enforcement of workplace safety standards and the routine inspection of North Carolina workplaces in order to ensure adequate protection for all workers. We support just compensation and adequate care for the victims of occupational diseases and work-related injuries. We particularly support efforts to reduce, treat, and eliminate the risk of long-term injury resulting from repetitive job-related activities. We believe the Department of Labor should be an advocate for legislation that promotes safety in the workplace. Safety is a vital component of a productive, profitable workplace.

**RIGHT-TO-KNOW LAWS:** We believe that workers have a right to know whether they are at risk of exposure to hazardous materials and to the steps that they can take to protect themselves from harmful contact with such substances.

**LIVING WAGE:** We support a living minimum wage to ensure that workers can adequately provide for their own well being and that of their families.

**JOB TRAINING:** We strongly support the expansion of apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs to help our young people and displaced workers to develop marketable job skills. We believe that special care should be taken to expand job opportunities for the disabled. We believe the Commissioner of Labor should be a more vocal advocate and partner in the goal of job training and use the resources of the office to achieve such.

**EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE:** We support equal access to employment opportunities for women and men and are committed to equal pay for comparable work. We believe the Department of Labor should be a partner in these endeavors.

**CHILD CARE:** The changing nature of our workforce has had a profound impact upon our families. We believe that employment should promote, enhance, and nurture stable and healthy family relationships instead of harming them. To that end, we support development of incentives for private employers to provide high quality childcare services. We also support development of incentives for, and the removal of obstacles to, alternative work opportunities such as part-time, shared-time, and flexible-time work schedules in order to expand opportunities for more people to care for their children.

**MIGRANT WORKERS:** We support sanitary living conditions, adequate health care, educational opportunities, and safe working conditions for migrant workers and their families. All workers in North Carolina, regardless of immigration status, have the right to a living wage, timely payment for services, and safe working and housing conditions.

**COLLECTIVE BARGAINING:** We reassert our fundamental belief in the collective bargaining process as a means of serving the interests of both public and private employees and employers. Those interests include better productivity, fair and adequate employee compensation and benefits, and safe, harmonious, and healthy working conditions.

**NON-DISCRIMINATORY EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES:** We support access to employment without discrimination of any kind. We support vigorous enforcement of existing anti-discrimination laws to ensure that all persons have access to good jobs at fair wages and benefits.

## **PAYING FOR PROGRESS**

Government services are not free. We believe that all taxes, especially those that fall hardest on middle-class and poor families, should be kept as low as is possible, consistent with the maintenance of an appropriate level of government services. The use of a progressive tax system is the only way to fairly pay for the government services needed to build a solid foundation for our future economic security. We oppose reliance on regressive taxes, which unfairly burden the poor and the middle class. We believe that any future changes in the tax laws should increase the progressivity of our tax system.

The North Carolina Democratic Party supports the wise use of tax monies without waste or extravagance. We support the introduction of increased efficiencies in all areas of government to hold down the tax burden on the people of our State. We are proud of the long history of efficient government and public investments in infrastructure that Democratic leaders have provided in North Carolina.

## **SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**

We believe that the best way to defend our home is to be prepared, and that North Carolina should have every safeguard possible in place to protect from attacks. This

preparation should include the best technology and other appropriate tools for local and State law enforcement officials.

**ENERGY POLICY:** We recognize that a primary source of financial support for our Nation's enemies stems from our own dependence on foreign oil. We encourage the creation of a comprehensive energy policy, emphasizing the use of alternative fuel sources and energy efficiency, as a means of reducing our nation's dependence on foreign oil and depriving terrorists of their source of income.

**HEALTH:** We support vigilant protection of North Carolinians' health, and a registry of potentially deadly biological agents that could be used as weapons. We believe that, in an emergency, the State's public health officials should determine through testing if a biological threat has occurred and decide if quarantine or other safety measures should occur.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION:** We believe that the residents of North Carolina have a right to know when their safety is threatened in order to make informed decisions about their safety. We encourage rapid alerts in case of danger, and full disclosure, when appropriate, in times of crisis.

**PUBLIC SERVANTS:** We also strongly support our men and women in uniform who protect our communities every day. We are proud of and thankful for our police and fire/rescue forces and other public servants.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT:** We support law enforcement efforts to obtain additional resources for improved communication, better intelligence gathering and we also encourage better cooperation in sharing information, detaining suspects and alerting the public, within the framework of the Constitution.

## SENIORS

We believe that seniors should enjoy independence and economic security in recognition of their many contributions to society.

**SOCIAL SECURITY:** We believe Social Security is a contract that must not be compromised. We oppose privatization and the diversion of Social Security funds for other purposes. We condemn massive federal budget deficits, which force the government to borrow from the Social Security Trust Fund.

**HEALTH CARE/PRESCRIPTION DRUGS:** We strongly oppose privatization of Medicare. We believe any changes in Medicare should focus on health care cost containment to diminish the ever-increasing out-of-pocket medical costs that have risen at rates significantly higher than the rate of inflation. Seniors should be assured both quality and choice of health care providers. Seniors should be protected against arbitrary health care cancellation. We support economical, accessible prescription drug coverage for our seniors.

**ASSISTED LIVING AND CARE:** We support continued efforts to strengthen training programs for those who work in the field of aging. We support expanded, accessible transportation and affordable educational and leisure opportunities for older adults. We support a background check for all employees with direct care responsibilities for seniors.

**INCOME:** We support efforts to raise incomes of seniors and all other persons above the poverty level to allow them to live in dignity, safety, and security. We support fairness in economic benefit programs for all senior North Carolinians. We support an increase in homestead exemption from property taxation for the elderly.

**SENIORS AND FAMILIES:** We support efforts to keep families together through safe, affordable adult day care, health care, counseling, job retraining, nutritional assistance, and other means of making life more pleasant for seniors. We pledge to support every reasonable effort to assure that families will not be financially impoverished because of exorbitant housing and health care costs. We Democrats continue our commitment to the Homestead Act.

## **VETERANS, ARMED FORCES AND THEIR FAMILIES**

We recognize that the freedoms we enjoy in this great country do not come without a price, and that the ultimate price has been paid again and again by the people of this great State. We further recognize that North Carolina plays an essential role in the defense of this country, not only because of the sacrifices made by our sons and daughters in military service, but also because our State contains some of the largest and most important military bases in the world. The presence of these bases is a source of great pride and is vital to the economic prosperity of the communities in which they are located.

The North Carolina Democratic Party reaffirms its longtime commitment to North Carolina's sons and daughters who presently serve proudly in the Armed Forces of the United States, to those men and women who serve at bases located within our borders, and to all veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States, whose service has made this nation an example of freedom and democracy that shines throughout the world. We also stand in support of all efforts to care for their families while those soldiers are away, and to assist them when they return. This party will never let them down and will keep its promises to veterans and their families.

## **CONCLUSION**

**THEREFORE,** We North Carolina Democrats:

- recognize and honor the American family as the foundation upon which our society and its social and political institutions must rest. With this in mind, we offer a platform that secures the rights of our children, protects the integrity and dignity of the

elderly, and promotes the right of working men and women across this State to compete freely and equally for economic advancement and self-fulfillment.

- believe in judicious stewardship of public revenues and affirm that a public office is a public trust. We believe in honest, transparent and accountable government.
- believe that democracy cannot survive without education. We believe that adequate health care must be accessible to all and that homelessness, illiteracy, and poverty must be eradicated from every corner of our State.
- strongly support the protection and preservation of our environment.
- are committed to firm and effective law enforcement and to the swift and fair prosecution and rehabilitation of those who engage in criminal activity. We believe that adequate procedural safeguards are essential to the protection of those wrongly accused and the preservation of liberty.

On this platform we proudly stand.

###

Submitted, this the 24th day of August 2005, by the Platform and Resolutions Committee, North Carolina Democratic Party.