



NCDP

— NORTH CAROLINA DEMOCRATIC PARTY —



Platform and Resolutions Committee
NORTH CAROLINA DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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NORTH CAROLINA DEMOCRATIC PARTY

2016 PLATFORM

PREAMBLE

As the oldest continuous political party in the world, the Democratic Party has evolved to 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.

The Democratic Party fully supports the Bill of Rights and later amendments and opposes any frivolous or malicious amendments to the Constitution, which limit the inalienable rights of the citizen.

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 historic 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 AND AQUACULTURE

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 provides food for all of us. We support efforts that will aid our farmers in adjusting to social, economic and environmental challenges in a manner that allows them increasing efficiency, productivity, and profitability.

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 encourage cooperation to prevent the conversion of prime farmland to non-

farming uses. We believe the values of the small family farm are what make North Carolina great.

North Carolinians have also relied on our state's abundant waters as a means of livelihood for generations. Realizing the economic and cultural impact, which this industry has, we will strive to preserve and promote the jobs, which aquaculture and maritime businesses provide to the citizens of our state.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Our future as a State and nation depends upon strong families 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 family and policies that strengthen it.

Democrats pledge our steadfast commitment to improving the well-being of children and families. These efforts includes measures to provide solid education and economic opportunities, to prevent 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.

Social Security is an earned benefit for our families, particularly dependent children, widows, widowers, retirees, seniors, and the disabled. This program should never be compromised. We oppose privatization and the diversion of Social Security funds for any other purposes.

CIVIL JUSTICE

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

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION: We support continued efforts to develop appropriate alternative methods of dispute resolution and to increase funding to such efforts. We oppose any measures that deprive individuals and businesses of full and equal access to the civil justice system.

CIVIL RIGHTS: Racism, discrimination, hate, and bigotry still exist. Therefore, there is a need to continue to fight those who would take away the civil rights for which we fight so hard. Since many devoted their lives to social change, it is our obligation, to demand civil rights for all people regardless of race, gender, gender identification political persuasion, national origin, religion, age group and sexual orientation.

Further, because the United States Constitution does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex nor does it include language that addresses comprehensively the protection of the rights of women,

we call for a renewed effort to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, as proposed by Congress on March 22, 1972.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM: We believe that our criminal justice system is in dire need of reform and that our current system disproportionately affects the poor and minorities. We believe that we must reform mandatory sentencing laws at both the federal and state levels, end mass incarceration, implement police body cameras, end racial profiling, and help those who were formerly incarcerated to re-enter society through initiatives that reduce barriers to employment, e.g. “banning the box.” Moreover, we must rebuild the trust between communities, particularly communities of color, and the police if we are to have safe neighborhoods and communities. We support community policing and oppose the militarization of law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, we support decriminalization of marijuana as well as changes to federal prohibition and allow states to develop their own drug laws as it relates to marijuana possession and consumption, including for medicinal and recreational use.

2009 RACIAL JUSTICE ACT: We condemn and oppose the 2013 repeal of the North Carolina Racial Justice Act and call for its reintroduction and expansion. Racial prejudice, especially in the criminal justice system, should not exist and each person in our state deserves due process and a fair trial.

JUVENILE JUSTICE: We believe that North Carolina should raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction from sixteen years old to eighteen years old for misdemeanors and low-level felonies. Presently North Carolina is only one of two states where sixteen and seventeen year olds can be charged and prosecuted as adults regardless of the severity of the crime. We also support and encourage the Department of Public Safety’s Juvenile Justice Section in the promotion of alternatives to the traditional justice system, such as Teen Courts and diversion programs.

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

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, price gouging, unfair restraints of trade, deception, fraud, and other abuses that undermine free enterprise system.

INSURANCE RATES: We oppose discrimination in either rates or access with regards to all forms of insurance. We stand for the guarantees 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.

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 fraud. Democrats believe in fair business practices with full and honest public disclosure for stockholders, enforced by government regulations.

UTILITY RATES: We support essential utilities being available at reasonable rates and believe that members of the State Utilities Commission should represent the ratepayers of our State, rather than the utility companies.

SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

We believe any policy adopted by the North Carolina General Assembly should include a three-pronged approach that focuses on prevention, treatment and recovery. Substance use disorders affect North Carolinians from all geographic areas of the state and include all socioeconomic classes. Federal agencies and medical professionals have shifted their focus on emphasizing that addiction and substance use disorders are diseases and not moral failures. We must educate all North Carolinians in the science of addiction medicine. As recently as 2014, the vast majority of those who required treatment for a substance use disorder were unable to receive treatment due to lack of resources and access to this life-saving opportunity. We support greater access to treatment with reduced wait times for admissions to these programs. We also demand greater support for recovery support services, as recovery does not end upon discharge from treatment; it is a lifetime endeavor. We support keeping those with mental illness and substance use disorders out of jails and prisons by providing appropriate treatment instead of incarceration and that those who are dealing with behavioral health and substance use disorder diagnoses receive needed aid to securing housing. We urge that North Carolina continue to monitor the use and implementation of the Good Samaritan laws and support the over-the-counter access to the lifesaving drug Naloxone, which can immediately reverse the devastating effects of opiate overdoses. We urge prioritizing rehabilitation and treatment over prison for low-level and nonviolent drug offenses, and work to end the era of mass incarceration.

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.

GLOBAL ECONOMY: 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.

HELPING OUR WORKFORCE: Democrats believe in protecting our State's workforce and encouraging assistance for workers, job creation, new investment in areas most severely affected by economic decline, and leveling the trade playing field for North Carolina industries.

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, a competitive business climate, and a quality of life that attracts and creates good new jobs to provide a higher standard of living for all North Carolinians - especially in our low-wealth communities. We believe in a balanced approach to offering incentives to grow local businesses and to attract new business. We believe that economic incentives should result in a real net benefit for North Carolina citizens.

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 largest growing industries, depends upon the presence of clean and maintained beaches, unspoiled forests, and clean rivers and lakes.

SMALL AND LOCAL BUSINESS: We believe innovation and risk-taking in the pursuit of excellence should be rewarded. We believe that small and local business development in North Carolina is the best use of tax breaks and other support programs because they are the backbone of our economy.

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, the formerly incarcerated, persons with disabilities, and those with mental health diagnoses and substance use disorders. We should eradicate hunger.

FINANCIAL LITERACY: We believe that all families deserve the opportunity to learn the skills needed to manage their resources

and credit prudently and to save and invest for life goals of home ownership, providing for the education of children, and securing a financially strong retirement.

RETIREMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY: We reiterate our commitment to secure a healthy retirement. Individuals, employers, and government must all play a role. We support measures to preserve and protect existing public and private pension plans. In the 21st century, Americans also need better ways to save for retirement. We support the automatic enrollment of every worker in a workplace pension plan that can be carried from job to job and support the matching of savings for working families.

We believe CEOs should not be able to loot from workers' pensions while lining their own pockets.

We believe all employees who have company pensions receive annual disclosures about their pension fund's investments, including full details about which projects have been invested in, the performance of those investments and appropriate details about probable future investments strategies. We also will support reform corporate bankruptcy laws so that workers' retirements are a priority for funding and workers are not left with worthless IOU's after years of service.

Finally, we support eliminating all federal income taxes for seniors making less than \$50,000 per year. Lower- and middle-income seniors already have to worry about high health care and uncertain energy costs; they should not have to worry about tax burdens as well.

We reject proposals that would cut Social Security; we believe that it is indispensable. We will fulfill our obligation to strengthen Social Security and to make sure that it provides guaranteed benefits Americans can count on, now and in future generations. We firmly oppose the privatization of Social Security, and any and all efforts that may lead to privatization.

JOBS: We believe that all North Carolinians deserve rewarding jobs through which they can support themselves and their families. We believe that business, government, educational institutions and employees should work together as partners to ensure high paying, rewarding jobs for our people.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

North Carolinians have a right to a quality public 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 - a founder of our Party - "any nation which expects to remain both ignorant and free expects that which never has been nor ever shall be."

As a first order of priority, Democrats stand against the draconian cuts that have been made by Republican legislature and their leadership during their time in the majority. It will be a top priority of North Carolina Democrats to stop and reverse these cuts and fully invest in our state's public education system.

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

North Carolinians should be guaranteed a full and unfettered opportunity to develop their abilities to the greatest possible extent, including access to lifelong educational opportunities. We continue to support efforts to strengthen academic standards and close achievement gaps for all North Carolinians.

We recognize the many outstanding public and private schools, colleges, and universities in our State and believe that these institutions should strive to be models for education and economic growth in the state.

We encourage and support efforts of school systems to promote and maintain diversity. We support decision making at the classroom level 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 in their schools.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES: North Carolina's community colleges – begun by and fostered by North Carolina Democrats – play a vital role in enhancing the lives of all people and in paving the way for a brighter future for our State. We support adequate funding for all community college programs, such as basic literacy programs, technical and vocational programs, new and expanded industrial training, small business centers, and occupational retraining, and the timely transfer of university research into the curricula of community colleges. Furthermore, we believe that free community college tuition is a worthy goal for our state to ensure we are able to keep college costs low and train our workforce.

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. We also support expanding access to our early childhood education programs with the goal of achieving universal Pre-K.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS: We support superior educational opportunities for all North Carolina children, including efforts to reduce class size, and increased support for home-to-school transition programs. 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 and well-rounded education. 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, as well as equipment, instructional supplies and support services for at risk students and for after school programs in our public schools. We oppose any underfunded or unfunded federal and state mandates. All children have the right to a public education that respects their religious freedom and traditions. Furthermore, we support the *Leandro* decision and support full funding by the General Assembly to implement all provisions laid forth in the court's decision.

High stakes testing preparation and administration takes away weeks from instruction and encourages teachers to teach to the test, narrowing the curriculum. High stakes tests attempt to measure student achievement by requiring them to sit still for four hours to take tests that encourage the notion that for every question, there is one right answer and three wrong answers. These tests do not measure skills that are more applicable to the work place such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity. That is why our students should take as few high stakes tests as is required by the Every Student Succeeds Act. We oppose the erroneous practice of measuring teacher quality from the results of high stakes tests.

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

PRIVATE SCHOOL VOUCHERS AND CHARTERS: We oppose the implementation of private and religious school voucher programs. Such programs harm our traditional public schools by diluting the financial support for those institutions, making our system less socio-economically diverse and encouraging families to abandon the public school system that serves everyone. We oppose the use of charter schools to re-segregate our student populations. We support the money following the student to whatever public school they attend.

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 and oppose efforts to that remove career status or tenure from our education professionals. The way in which we compensate our educators should reflect our respect for the teaching profession. 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.

We believe the North Carolina State Board of Education should annually review the compensation level for entry-level and veteran

teaching professionals to ensure competitive salaries to recruit and retain the very best talent available. Our children deserve the best and brightest, and we must provide competitive compensation packages to recruit the best educators.

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. We do not support ending programs based on job availability in the economy. 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. Furthermore, we believe that students who are undocumented immigrants should receive in-state tuition if they graduated from a North Carolina high school.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: We support vocational education, including high school career and technical education programs as well as post-high school high-tech studies under the leadership of the North Carolina Community College System, as an important initiative to prepare a skilled workforce for the future.

EFFICIENT AND ETHICAL GOVERNMENT

We believe that the mission of government is to expand opportunity - not bureaucracy - for our culturally and ethnically diverse population. Democrats have demonstrated that government can be both responsive and responsible. We support continuing efforts to make State government more efficient. We demand that our leaders have the highest ethical standards in theory and practice as well as providing public services to all citizens in a non-discriminatory fashion.

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. 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, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, religion, veteran status, national origin, disability, age or sexual orientation in the hiring, firing or promotion of public employees. The purpose of the public retirement system is to help provide economic security in retirement. We support maintaining our sound and fiscally responsible, defined-benefit retirement system for all public employees.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: The North Carolina General Assembly has involved itself in local issues to the point of overreach, such as the seizure of Asheville's water system, the seizure of Charlotte Douglas International Airport, and changing the structure and

method of election of local governing bodies. We support the concept of home rule for counties and municipalities to develop ordinances and policies related to employment, employee compensation, and housing, so that they may adequately address the issues facing their communities. We further believe the General Assembly should respect local governments, their authority, and the voters who elected them by not passing punitive local bills aimed to curtail the power of local governments.

OPEN GOVERNMENT: The workings and activities of government are engaged upon on behalf of the citizens of North Carolina, and we believe that the people are entitled to observe these affairs as openly and easily as is possible.

RECORDS ACCESSIBILITY: We believe that State government must be accountable to the people of this great State through transparency in how government business is transacted and the releasing of information in a timely manner. We firmly believe that personal information maintained by North Carolina government must remain secure and confidential.

AMERICAN TERRITORIES: Puerto Ricans have been American Citizens since the passage of the Jones-Shafroth Act of 1917. Since that time the people of Puerto Rico have contributed to cultural, economic, and political life in the United States. However, the debt crisis in Puerto Rico is such that it is affecting its social fabric nearing a humanitarian crisis due to vital services like education and medical care going unmet. The political status of the colony remains an issue of overwhelming importance that must be resolved. Congressional inaction has held the island back on this and other issues. As such, we urge Congress to amend the Bankruptcy Amendment and Federal Judgeship Act of 1984, and allow Puerto Rico, and all United States territories, to restructure its debts under Chapter 9. We call for the repeal of Section 27 of The Merchant Marine Act of 1920, also known as the Jones Act of 1920, which makes it so that only American ships can carry goods between the island and mainland thereby raising consumer prices, stagnating economic development, and keeps the cost of oil and natural gas high. We ask Congress to pass legislation to allow for equal treatment relating to healthcare and other federal programs. We insist that Congress pass legislation authorizing the people of Puerto Rico to decide its status and relationship to the United States.

ENVIRONMENT

We recommit ourselves to the wise stewardship and protection of our air, water, soil, forests, wetlands, watersheds, barrier islands, and ridgetops. We promote 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. The Democratic Party has consistently supported serious and effective measures to protect our environment and natural resources. We believe we can and must take steps to reduce global warming.

AIR, SOIL AND WATER: We support tax incentives and other benefits that encourage the use of alternative means of disposal of chemicals and waste by-products into the atmosphere, soil, and waters. We oppose initiatives to dilute water and air quality safeguard standards, most especially in Republican initiatives with titles intended to mislead the public. We believe in keeping public ownership of the coastline, so it is available to every North Carolinian, and the preservation of working waterfront areas.

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.

CONSERVATION: We call for conservation by our government, businesses, and citizens as a primary component of environmental responsibility.

FORESTS/WETLANDS: We support logging and timber management techniques that foster reforestation. We oppose the practice of clear-cutting. 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 oppose the sale of State and national forests.

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.

OFFSHORE DRILLING AND HYDRAULIC FRACTURING: We recognize that our coast is an outstanding natural resource that must be protected for future generations of North Carolinians. We oppose any offshore exploration for oil or natural gas adjacent to this State. We further recognize that our ground water is one of our most precious natural resources and that everyone has the right to clean water. We therefore oppose any and all efforts to implement or expand the dangerous practice of fracking in our state.

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 and national parks. We also support accessible and affordable parks.

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, which are costly to build and operate. 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.

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 use and 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, including coal ash deposits, in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods and ecologically sensitive areas. We support reasonable right-to-know laws to disclose fully the chemicals used and stored in our communities.

ANIMAL WELFARE: We recognize that humans share the Earth with other living beings who share with us the experience of pain and pleasure. We appreciate the joy, companionship and other benefits that our companion animals provide and believe it is our moral responsibility to treat these animals humanely and prevent their suffering. To that end, we are committed to the accomplishment of the following goals through appropriate legislation and regulatory action: providing for the basic welfare of all animals, reducing cat and dog overpopulation and optimizing animal control and sheltering. We insist on transparency in the treatment of animals in agribusiness.

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 who dedicate themselves to the principles of the Democratic Party. 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 North Carolina Democrats in every race - from local contests to both judicial elections and 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, including significant outreach and inclusion of young people in order to both strengthen our party and guarantee its future. We will increase efforts to encourage historically under-represented groups, such as women and minorities, to participate in the party affairs and to seek election to public and party office.

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, including the gradual introduction of a public financing option. Furthermore, we believe that corporations are an instrument of law and are not people as envisioned in the United States Constitution and that money, and thus the influence of the corporations, is not equivalent to human free speech. Since corporations can exist simultaneously in many nations and can have leadership by non-US citizens, we believe it to be unacceptable to allow foreign non-citizen entities the right and the power to influence the

composition of the United States Government. We strongly support the effort to amend the United States Constitution to reclaim our democracy and clearly state that individual citizens, not corporations, are entitled to constitutional rights. We support the re-introduction of the income tax check-off fund as a way for the people to have a direct influence on our state's political system.

CAMPAIGNS: We shall vigorously fight for what we believe. 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.

JUDICIAL SELECTION: We support a non-partisan 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. We further support the reinstatement of public financing for judicial elections to prevent our courts from being sold to the highest bidder by special interest groups. We oppose retention elections for judges.

REDISTRICTING: We recognize that partisan gerrymandering has been a practice of both major parties in our state. We support a remedy to this problem through the implementation of a non-partisan, independent redistricting commission. This commission would shift power from self-interested politicians, back to the people, and allow voters to choose their representatives, rather than politicians choosing their voters. Furthermore, we believe that local governments, including school boards, city councils, and boards of county commissioners should be able to fairly draw their own electoral districts without interference from the General Assembly.

VOTING RIGHTS: Voting rights are fundamental rights because they are protective of all other rights. We will work to fully protect and enforce the fundamental Constitutional right of every American to vote—to ensure that the Constitution's promise is fully realized. Due to the United States Supreme Court decision gutting key provisions of the Voting Rights Act, we support passing federal legislation that would fix the damage to this crucial Act. We support fully funding the Help America Vote Act and work to fulfill the promise of election reform, including fighting to end long lines at voting booths and ensuring that all registration materials, voting materials, polling places, and voting machines are truly accessible to seniors, Americans with disabilities, and citizens with limited English proficiency. We will ensure that absentee ballots are accessible and accurately counted. We will vigorously enforce our existing voting rights laws instead of making them tools of partisan political agendas and we oppose discriminatory laws that require photo identification in order to vote or register to vote, shorten the early voting period, or eliminate out of precinct voting. We oppose tactics that purge eligible voters from voter rolls. We are committed to passing the Count Every Vote Act. Finally, we will enact legislation that establishes harsh penalties for those who engage in voter intimidation and creates a process for providing accurate information to misinformed voters so they can cast their votes in time.

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 by establishing universal, automatic voter registration in North Carolina and across the country. We support increased funding to educate voters about legal alternatives to voting early instead of waiting until Election Day and to improve the speed and convenience of Election Day voting, including expanding the early voting period to twenty days with the inclusion of evening and Sunday voting.

Election officials shall immediately inform all individuals denied their ability to vote of their right to cast a provisional ballot. We vigorously support efforts to ensure the right to vote for all citizens without discrimination or intimidation. We also encourage efforts to increase the turnout of North Carolina's voting-age population. We strongly support voting equipment, machines, mechanisms, and procedures that create and preserve an accurate, auditable paper documentation of all votes cast.

FOREIGN POLICY

We support increased diplomatic and cooperative measures by the United States government to ensure peaceful solutions to international problems by – but not limited to – participation in the International Criminal Court and international agreements to combat climate change, and the full funding of our financial contributions to the United Nations, especially humanitarian endeavors. We believe foreign policy should be conducted with our enemies as well as our allies and through this lens; we remain supportive of President Obama's nuclear accord with Iran and normalization of relations with Cuba. In addition, we support a vigorous diplomatic engagement of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to the goal of establishing peace in the region and a Palestinian state such that the Palestinians will have the ability to control their own destiny and wellbeing.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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

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

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 – including the introduction of new stem cell lines – with appropriate ethical controls.

EDUCATION: We support medically and factually comprehensive, age-appropriate educational programs in our schools and public health agencies and shall work to ensure educators are empowered and permitted to provide scientifically accurate information about safe sexual practices.

HEALTH CARE: We recognize that health care decisions are best made within the context of the healthcare provider and the patient. 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 the Affordable Care Act, one of the crowning achievements of President Barack Obama and the Democratic Party, which provides for near universal health insurance coverage. We pledge to defend the Affordable Care Act and build upon it by making premiums more affordable, lessening out-of-pocket expenses for consumers, and pursuing a public health insurance option. To expand health insurance coverage in North Carolina, we support expanding Medicaid so that struggling families and individuals can get the health care coverage they need. We also believe in the need to crack down on rising prescription drug prices and eliminating the systemic monopolies that prevent Americans and local and state governments from negotiating drug prices to ensure that Americans can access critical prescriptions without financial burden.

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.

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 choice and not that of the government. We believe that we should focus on preventing unintended pregnancies and reducing the need for abortion through increasing access to family planning services, access to affordable birth control – including emergency contraception – and by providing comprehensive age-appropriate sex education. Furthermore, abortion must be safe, legal, accessible to all North Carolina women regardless of ability to pay; therefore, the State

abortion fund should be fully funded and accessible to indigent women.

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 support 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. As Democrats, we believe that local governments should have local control over housing policy, including being able to enact mandatory inclusionary zoning ordinances and mandating of affordable housing in their communities. 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. We support aging in place initiatives.

HUMAN RIGHTS

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.

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 and that our judicial system be fully funded in order to better serve the people of North Carolina.

DISCRIMINATION: We oppose discrimination of any kind - whether in employment, health care, education, retirement programs, housing, or any other area – because of gender, race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, veteran status, religious affiliation, or spiritual beliefs. We encourage vigorous enforcement of existing civil rights laws and a periodic re-examination of their adequacy. Furthermore, we support the federal Equality Act of 2015 as an amendment to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex relating to employment, housing, public education, and federal funding.

LGBT RIGHTS: We firmly support the legalization of equal marriage rights to all loving and committed partners as was recently granted by the United States Supreme Court and fundamentally reject any efforts to remove these rights granted to all North Carolinians.

North Carolina has denied human rights to a traditionally discriminated against minority with the passage of House Bill 2. The North Carolina Democratic Party demands the immediate repeal of House Bill 2 and rejects the notion that human rights should be eligible for a vote by the populace. Human rights are fundamental to one's sense of security and well-being in an advanced society such as ours, and the removal of said rights should not be subject to the will of the people.

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

IMMIGRATION

We are a nation of immigrants. We have consistently fought for the rights of working immigrants. 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 immigrants but with a goal toward English proficiency.

While we recognize that immigration laws are enacted at the federal level, our State government and grassroots citizens can affect such policies by influencing our federal representatives to strengthen our national borders, protect homeland security, and to enforce existing laws while honoring our shared humanity. We strive for a just and comprehensive immigration law, which includes a path to citizenship for immigrants that have contributed to making our State great.

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. To that end, we support the rights of public and private workers to engage in collective bargaining.

We are confident that investments in the training and retraining of workers in view of our changing State, national, and world economies bring about a high level of economic growth.

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. 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.

EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE: We support equal access to employment opportunities for women and men of all working ages and are committed to equal pay for equal work. As Democrats, we believe that our state's government should ensure that wages of workers should not be stolen by their employers... We believe the Department of Labor should be a partner in these endeavors and that we can only achieve such proactive measures with a Democratic Commissioner of Labor

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE: One of the first bills signed by President Bill Clinton was the Family and Medical Leave Act; however, this legislation does not require employers to pay employees who take family or medical leave. As Democrats, we believe that employees should be guaranteed up to 12 weeks of paid family medical leave and that it be paid for by the wealthiest Americans paying their fair share, rather than raising taxes on working families or burdening small businesses.

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 and eliminate the risk of long-term injury resulting from repetitive job-related activities. 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.

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 advocate for job training and use official resources to achieve such.

LIVING WAGE: We support a living wage to ensure that all workers (including tipped employees) can adequately provide for their own wellbeing and that of their families.

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.

NON-DISCRIMINATORY EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES: We support access to employment without discrimination of any kind, including efforts to “ban the box” so that job applicants have a chance at employment opportunities to provide for themselves and their families. We support vigorous enforcement of existing anti-discrimination laws to ensure that all persons have access to good jobs at fair wages and benefits.

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.

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 pay fairly 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.

We support 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 historically provided in North Carolina.

The last balanced federal budget was under President Bill Clinton and under President Barack Obama; the Democrats have reduced our federal budget deficit. Republicans talk fiscal responsibility, but Democrats live it. Democrats are willing to do what is necessary to have a balanced budget and reduce debt.

SECURITY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

We believe the best way to defend our home is to be prepared, and that North Carolina should have safeguards in place to protect from attacks and to be adequately prepared for natural disasters. 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.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTIONAs Democrats we recognize that there is a serious issue with gun violence in our country, yet we also respect the Constitution's Second Amendment. We believe the promotion of standards to curtail gun violence is not inconsistent with the Second Amendment. Among the measures we support are strengthening background checks, closing loopholes such as the well-known “gun show loophole,” holding gun manufacturers accountable through repeal of their special immunity status, and keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous individuals. We believe that responsible gun owners should not be punished for the wrongdoing of those who seek to do harm, but that we must also take proactive measures to slow and eventually eliminate this epidemic in our country.

HEALTH: We support vigilant protection of North Carolinians' health, and a registry of potentially deadly agents, biological and chemical, that could be released into our environment.

LAW ENFORCEMENT: We support law enforcement efforts to obtain additional resources for improved communication and better intelligence gathering, including the implementation of police body cameras and community policing. We also encourage better cooperation in sharing information, detaining suspects and alerting the public, within the framework of the Constitution. We also support moving the State Bureau of Investigation back to the purview of the North Carolina Attorney General, rather than allowing a political appointee direct an agency in charged with investigating public corruption.

PUBLIC INFORMATION: We believe that North Carolina residents 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.

SENIORS

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

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 and psychological testing for all employees with direct care responsibilities for seniors.

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.

INCOME: We support efforts to raise incomes of seniors and all other persons above the poverty level through an expansion of Social Security 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 the 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.

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.

VETERANS, ARMED FORCES AND THEIR FAMILIES

We stand in support of protecting our nation and State. We recognize that freedom does not come without a price, and many members of the Armed Forces - our active duty, reservists and National Guard - from this great State have made the ultimate sacrifice. We hereby reaffirm our longtime commitment to our sons and daughters who are serving honorably in the Armed Forces at this time, those veterans whose service has made this nation and our State an example of democracy for others throughout the world, and their families.

MILITARY INSTALLATIONS: We recognize that North Carolina plays an essential role in the defense of our nation because our State

contains some of the largest and most crucial military installations necessary for protecting our national security. The presence of these installations is a source of great pride and is vital to the economic prosperity of the communities in which they are located.

We support efforts to keep North Carolina installations operational for the benefit of our nation and communities.

BENEFITS: We believe it is important to support members of our Armed Forces during times of conflict, natural disaster and beyond. We support sustaining existing benefits - including educational assistance, health care, housing, small business, burial and other benefits offered to members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families. We also support improving combat-related trauma centers, expanding medical and prosthetic research, and implementing sound procedures for expediting the processing of benefits claims. Furthermore, we support providing adequate services to Veterans including, but not limited to civilian transition services, Veteran's Courts, job training and in-state tuition.

COLLABORATION AND RESPONSIBILITY: We encourage collaboration between members of the Armed Forces and first responders in the preparedness and response to any attacks or natural disasters. We also encourage responsible procurement practices within the defense community.

FAMILY SUPPORT: We support efforts to care for families of the Armed Forces - especially while members are deployed, and to assist them when they return. We support programs such as counseling, financial management, and basic needs assistance that help families of deployed service members in managing difficulties created by longer and more frequent deployments.

MILITARY FORCE: We support a strong national defense that supplements - but does not replace - diplomacy as a means to advance international peace and economic prosperity. We believe that military force should be used only as a last resort. We support the recruitment and retention of highly skilled, motivated and trained members of the Armed Forces. We support the maintenance and readiness of the necessary force strength to respond successfully to any attacks or natural disasters. Moreover, we believe that we must strengthen our alliances across the globe to ensure that we can handle national security challenges stemming from ISIS and global terrorism, climate change, and cyber warfare.

RESOURCES: We support the acquisition of necessary resources - including protective equipment and weapons - for members of the Armed Forces essential for protecting their safety while performing their duty

RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES: We support protecting the civil rights of all members of the Armed Forces, including allowing women to serve in combat roles or service members being able to serve openly as LGBT. We also support the laws of armed conflict and the humane treatment of all detainees, war criminals and prisoners of war. We affirm efforts to defend our nation and State against terrorism,

both foreign and domestic, and ensure that national security can and should be undertaken while preserving the civil rights and liberties of North Carolina residents. We support the enforcement of the Uniformed Services Employment, Reemployment Rights Act, ensuring that activated Reservists, and National Guard can resume their jobs upon return.

CONCLUSION

THEREFORE, We North Carolina Democrats:

Support the sanctity of 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. Our Party seeks a proper balance between self-interest and the common interest.

Believe in judicious stewardship of public revenues and affirm that a public office is a public trust. We believe in honest, ethical, 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.

Believe in fairness, freedom, justice, and privacy.

On this platform we proudly stand.

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Submitted, this the 11th day of June 2016, by the Resolutions and Platform Committee, North Carolina Democratic Party.

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