

Democratic Party of Wisconsin 2008 Platform

Second Draft of Platform

Preamble

The Democratic Party of Wisconsin strives to build an open, just and strong society where all citizens have equal opportunities to live meaningful, secure lives. We work actively for open, honest and responsive government that is accountable to the needs and the will of the people.

Justice, Human Concerns, and Democracy

Our government must support values common to all people, including freedom, fairness, family, responsibility and community.

One of the primary jobs of government is to ensure that everyone can lead dignified, healthy and fulfilling lives. We value love, commitment, stability and nurturing of all family members. Our Constitution guarantees that we are all equal regardless of race, color, class, religion, actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, age, occupation, national origin, physical disabilities or appearance, or political beliefs. We support equal legal rights for all individuals in committed, loving relationships. We will work to ensure that basic civil liberties are forever preserved. Any freedom lost due to government restrictions imposed on any of us violates and endangers us all.

It is vital that government respect, support and protect freedom of expression. When government attempts to limit the rights of its citizens, the fundamental philosophy on which our nation was established is destroyed. We hold sacrosanct our civil liberties, including but hardly limited to freedom of speech, the right to privacy, the presumption of innocence and the principle of Habeus Corpus. Nothing less than the humane treatment of our fellow human beings is acceptable. Our government, checked and balanced among its three branches, serves us, and should it fail to protect our civil rights, has itself failed.

Our government serves us and protects our constitutional rights. We must fully fund our law enforcement activities and the defense of our homeland. The men and women who serve us are our first line of defense, and we must provide for them. Security of our society must be our concern, it cannot be given over to foreign interests nor can it be achieved if the resources of our National Guard and Homeland Security are unavailable here at home when we are in our greatest need.

We will work to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed, an equal voice in government and fair and equal treatment under the law. We recognize that minorities, senior citizens, and the poor often face formidable challenges, including obstacles to voting. We will work to eliminate those obstacles. We pursue legislation and cultural change that end racial and ethnic profiling, respect the sovereignty of Native American nations and ensure equality between men and women. We shall work for gender-balanced, qualified representation at all levels of government. Our goal is a government and an electoral process free of the corrupting influences of money and power wielded by some who lobby our representatives.

1
2 Empowerment of citizens in all civic affairs makes our nation ever stronger. Government must
3 be an open institution that people trust, complying with open meeting and public record laws
4 and elected through publicly funded state and national elections. Every citizen is guaranteed
5 the right to vote and equal access thereof. We have the right and duty to inspect and count all
6 votes and to have a paper ballot that guarantees voting accountability.

7
8 We expect the swift and immediate impeachment of officials who commit high crimes and
9 misdemeanors, regardless of political affiliations.

10
11 The broadcast spectrum belongs to all citizens; access to accurate information and a diversity of
12 viewpoints are essential to citizen empowerment. Therefore we will work to ensure diverse
13 local ownership of media outlets. We will provide strong support for public broadcasting and
14 other community-owned media outlets. We support free and equal access to news media for all
15 candidates for public office.

16
17 We respect the rights of all people to their religious beliefs and welcome all citizens into the
18 Democratic Party regardless of their beliefs. It is vital that we observe a strict separation
19 between government and religion. It is imperative to the survival of our Republic that the
20 rights of citizens to choose their own religious and philosophical beliefs remain whole.

21
22 We require a fair immigration policy providing a reasonable legal path to residency and
23 citizenship. The policy must include a fair opportunity for current undocumented residents to
24 achieve legal status. All people should be afforded the same basic principles of life, liberty, and
25 the pursuit of happiness.

26
27 It is important to care for all generations. We need affordable, quality, licensed daycare centers
28 and government support to pay for childcare. We cannot neglect our nation's future. We need
29 health education and disease prevention programs concerning smoking, alcohol, and sexually
30 transmitted infections. By making people aware of high-risk behaviors and providing affordable
31 healthcare assistance, they will be better able to adequately care for themselves.

32
33 Rather than abandoning our older generation, it is essential that we preserve Social Security.
34 Privatizing Social Security threatens the financial security of the most vulnerable. We must
35 enhance programs for the aging and disabled, including subsidized long-term in-home or
36 nursing home care.

37
38 We believe access to affordable health care is a national right and that the best solution to our
39 national health care crisis is a single-payer system. Such a system must provide universal
40 access for individuals of all ages, promote preventive measures, provide medications and
41 therapy and cover all physical and mental illnesses equally. Until that system is available, we
42 support broader coverage and increased funding for the current health care programs on local,
43 state and national levels, including BadgerCare, Medicaid and Healthy Wisconsin.

44
45 Personal moral, religious and medical decisions should be left up to the individual. We believe
46 in complete freedom of reproductive choice, as well as the individual's right to choose death
47 with dignity. Everyone has the right to obtain medications, properly and legally prescribed by
48 their physician, from any licensed pharmacy in a timely manner. It is neither the role of the

1 pharmacist nor the government to interfere in the private, personal decisions of citizens.
2 Funding for stem-cell research should not be influenced by religious beliefs. This research,
3 which would benefit all of mankind, should be supported on its scientific merits.
4

5 We oppose the death penalty as an inhumane and ineffective means of punishment. We
6 believe in equitable sentencing standards and increasing the authority of duly elected judges to
7 modify sentences. Furthermore, minor marijuana offenses should be processed as local
8 ordinance violations.
9

10 We support reasonable firearms regulations to ensure the safety of citizens and law
11 enforcement officials. We support the right to hunt and bear arms. We support Wisconsin's
12 concealed carry ban.
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16 **Education, Labor, and Economics**

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18 Quality public education for all is critical to a healthy democracy. Any form of public funding for
19 private schools diverts resources from and adversely impacts public schools. Increased
20 governmental funding is essential for all levels of public education, from early childhood to
21 financial aid for attending UW and Technical Colleges. No child should be denied a quality
22 education because of a personal lack of financial resources. The benefits of a quality education
23 always outweigh the costs.
24

25 We believe that students have the right to receive their education in a safe, respectful, and
26 nurturing environment, free from harassment or discrimination by teachers, staff, parents, or
27 other students. We support continued funding for all elements of the curriculum, including art,
28 music and physical education. A strong Wisconsin public education system builds a strong
29 Wisconsin.
30

31 Wisconsin's current educational funding system has failed. The law allowing a limited qualified
32 economic offer has caused diminishing compensation for teachers. Teacher compensation must
33 keep pace with costs of benefits and inflation. Public school teachers must not be taken for
34 granted. They deserve tremendous respect for their work educating our youth under
35 challenging circumstances.
36

37 A strong and secure nation depends on sound economic policy including meaningful full
38 employment. Business, labor and the public must work together to re-establish American jobs
39 on American soil. We must resist outsourcing, thus reinvigorating domestic industries.
40

41 Workers have rights to safe and equitable workplaces, living wages and secure benefits and
42 their rights to organize, bargain collectively and strike without fear of reprisal must continue.
43 We support public employees' rights to speedy mediation and binding arbitration of labor
44 disputes. Businesses must be held accountable for contracts with their employees. Right-to-
45 work legislation and the hiring of strikebreakers are anathema to a strong, justly-compensated
46 workforce. Pension and other retirement funds must be strictly safeguarded and responsibly
47 managed through regulation. In the event of bankruptcy, workers' unpaid wages must be the
48 first claim on remaining assets.

1
2 We support a tax system that is based on ability to pay. It is immoral to increase the tax
3 burden on those less able to pay while reducing it for the wealthy. Doing so fails to spur
4 economic and job development and hurts those who have the least income. The Federal
5 budget must be balanced through wise spending and fair taxation. We believe this generation
6 should be responsible for paying its own debts.

7
8 America must invest in a healthy economy by supporting worker training, affordable tuition at
9 our state-supported Universities and funding for ongoing research. American companies have
10 an obligation to our nation to be established here at home, follow our environmental and labor
11 laws and pay taxes for the good of the commons. Furthermore, we must protect our industries
12 from competition by enforcing tariffs against nations that tolerate unfair worker conditions.

13
14 Our wealth should be measured not only by the GDP but also by broad measures of wellbeing,
15 such as the United Nations Human Development Index, that incorporate factors like health,
16 education, literacy, employment and wages and environmental quality.

17 18 19 **Agriculture and Environment**

20
21 Wisconsin is America's Dairyland. We must preserve family farming by creating market systems
22 that assure a fair return to both the farmer and the processor. True Cooperatives and family
23 farm subsidies are essential to the economic viability and quality of life in rural areas. In
24 addition we support value-added agriculture which includes farming endeavors outside
25 traditional forms of agriculture. Price supports for mega-farms should be eliminated.

26
27 We encourage legislators and Democratic Party leaders to support farming systems that are
28 humane to animals, preserve our soil, water and forest resources, and produce wholesome food
29 for consumers. We support agricultural sustainability through growth in the "buy fresh buy
30 local" phenomenon which insures markets for local farmers and saves fuel by eliminating costly
31 transport. We also support truth in labeling of conventional, organic, and genetically modified
32 food.

33
34 Protecting the ecological systems of our planet is essential to the economic and social welfare
35 of our state and our nation and to the future of humanity. Our legislators and leaders must pay
36 heed to soil, water, and atmospheric pollution; scientific evidence of global warming; invasive
37 species; and decreasing biodiversity while enacting appropriate legislation to safeguard our
38 environment. We must maintain the integrity of the vast fresh water supply in the Great Lakes.

39
40 There is much to be done that has been ignored for too long. We must reduce greenhouse
41 gases by developing alternative and sustainable fuels and energy sources; increase production
42 of fuel efficient vehicles; reduce urban sprawl onto prime agricultural soils; improve and expand
43 local, regional and national mass transportation systems; and increase recycling and waste
44 management, all while maintaining biodiversity. We will restore responsible environmental
45 regulations affecting open space, wilderness areas, soil conservation, forest management, toxic
46 and hazardous waste disposal and cleanup and watershed protection. We call for the use of
47 advanced technology and environmentally-friendly practices to be implemented in industrial
48 settings and mining natural resources and the enforcement and strengthening of safety

1 regulations. To ensure the protection of our state's valuable natural resources, we support the
2 re-establishment of a Public Intervener's Office and the creation of an independent Department
3 of Natural Resources.
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6 **Foreign Affairs**

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8 Wisconsin Democrats work to protect and promote democratic forms of government, human
9 rights, social and economic justice, and the rule of law worldwide. We call upon our leaders to
10 promote and honor international protocols, conventions, covenants, accords and treaties that
11 lay the groundwork for a just, prosperous and peaceful world.
12

13 We encourage international efforts to combat poverty, famine, disease, illiteracy, genocide,
14 torture, capital punishment, pollution and global warming.
15

16 We find deplorable unfair trade and immigration policies, military and nuclear arms proliferation,
17 land mines, chemical and biological weapons, the use of radioactive waste as munitions,
18 ballistic missile defense systems, the militarism of space and American-run internment camps.
19

20 A strong military is essential to America's security, but preemptive war and the continued
21 occupation of Iraq is a major mistake. The bulk of today's turmoil lies with individuals whose
22 disdain for our Constitution and the rule of law is common knowledge. We have publicly and
23 frequently detailed their long list of transgressions at home and abroad. The executive branch
24 of government must maintain transparency in all decisions.
25

26 We pledge to lead with vision and values that respect the diversity of viewpoints and the right
27 to self-determination for sovereign nations. We promise to uphold our Constitution, reverse the
28 failures of the Bush administrations, and regain the admiration of our global community.
29

30 Our nation must seek to befriend others and encourage the native growth of democracy
31 worldwide. We must address the grievances and problems that foster terrorism rather than
32 preemptively fight the wars that perpetuate them. We have an obligation and duty to lead by
33 example rather than by force. We pledge the United States to be a cooperative and effective
34 leader, a partner with allied nations in the fight against terrorism and the pursuit of global
35 accords on human rights, economic justice, ecological protection and alleviation of disease.
36

37 A pre-emptive war is against our nation's principles and harms our credibility and standing in
38 the world. War must always be a last resort. All branches of our Government and military must
39 conform to the Geneva Conventions and not tolerate the use of torture.
40

41 **Conclusion**

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43
44 The membership of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin has crafted and adopted this platform.
45 Our state and our country will become stronger and better by following the principles outlined
46 herein. We expect all candidates supported by the Democratic Party to support this Platform
47 and, when elected, to work to implement it.