

Democratic Party of Wisconsin 2008 Platform

Approved by Convention June 14, 2008

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.

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 or one branch usurp another, 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 nation. 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 first responders and military 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 our indigenous Native American host 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 Empowerment of citizens in all civic affairs strengthens our nation. Government must be an
2 open institution that people trust, complying with open meeting and public record laws and
3 elected through publicly funded state and national elections. Every citizen is guaranteed the
4 right to vote and equal access thereto, including ex-offenders immediately upon release into
5 their communities. We oppose voter ID requirements as discriminatory, equivalent to a poll
6 tax, a voter suppression tactic, and a fraudulent solution to exaggerated voter fraud. We have
7 the right and duty to inspect and count all votes and to have a voter-verified paper ballot that
8 guarantees accurate vote counting.

9
10 We expect the swift impeachment and removal from office of officials who commit high crimes
11 and misdemeanors.

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

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

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

28
29 It is important to care for all generations. We need affordable, quality, licensed daycare centers
30 and government support to pay for childcare. We cannot neglect our nation's future. We need
31 health education and disease prevention programs concerning smoking, alcohol, and sexually
32 transmitted infections.

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

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

45
46 Personal moral, religious and medical decisions should be left up to the individual. We believe
47 in complete freedom of reproductive choice, as well as the individual's right to choose death
48 with dignity. Everyone has the right to timely obtain medications, properly and legally

1 prescribed by their physician, from any licensed pharmacy. It is neither the role of the
2 pharmacist nor the government to interfere in private medical decisions. Funding for stem-cell
3 research should not be influenced by religious beliefs. This research, which would benefit all
4 people, should be supported on its scientific merits.

5
6 Considering the rising cost of corrections and long-lasting effects of incarceration, we support
7 alternatives to prison.

8
9 We oppose the death penalty as an inhumane and ineffective means of punishment. We
10 believe in equitable sentencing standards and increasing the authority of judges to modify
11 sentences. The war on drugs is a colossal failure. We must discourage dangerous drug use
12 without criminalizing the user and provide rehabilitative treatment to addicted persons.
13 Furthermore, the law should be changed immediately to process minor drug offenses as local
14 ordinance violations.

15
16 We support reasonable firearms regulations to ensure the safety of citizens and law
17 enforcement officials. We support the right to hunt and bear arms. We support Wisconsin's
18 concealed carry ban.

19 20 21 **Education, Labor, and Economics**

22
23 Quality public education for all is critical to a healthy democracy and economy. Public funding
24 for private schools diverts resources from and adversely impacts public schools. Increased
25 governmental funding and financial aid is essential for all levels of public education. Nobody
26 should be denied a quality education because of a personal lack of financial resources. The
27 benefits of a quality education always outweigh the costs.

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

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

40
41 Revenue caps on school districts and other local governments must be eliminated. State or
42 federal governments must fully fund their mandates.

43
44 Public investment in arts and humanities promotes healthy communities and a healthy
45 economy. We support increased local, state, and federal funding of arts and humanities.

46
47 A strong and secure nation depends on sound economic policy that promotes and sustains full,
48 meaningful employment. Business, labor and the public must work together to re-establish

1 American jobs on American soil. We must resist outsourcing, thus reinvigorating domestic
2 industries.

3
4 Workers have rights to safe and equitable workplaces, living wages including pay equity for
5 women, and secure benefits. Workers' rights to organize, bargain collectively and strike without
6 fear of reprisal must continue and be strengthened. We support public employees' rights to
7 speedy mediation and binding arbitration of labor disputes. Businesses must be held
8 accountable for contracts with their employees. Right-to-work legislation and the hiring of
9 strikebreakers are anathema to a strong, justly-compensated workforce. Pension and other
10 retirement funds must be strictly safeguarded and responsibly managed through regulation. In
11 the event of bankruptcy, workers' unpaid wages must be the first claim on remaining assets.

12
13 We support a tax system that is based on ability to pay. It is immoral to increase the tax
14 burden on those less able to pay while reducing it for the wealthy. Doing so fails to spur
15 economic and job development and hurts those with the least income. The Federal budget
16 must be balanced through responsible spending and fair taxation. We call on the State
17 Legislature to make corporate taxes on par with the national average.

18
19 State and Federal governments must quickly take measures to protect victims of all forms of
20 fraudulent, unscrupulous, or usurious lending.

21
22 America must invest in a healthy economy by supporting worker training, affordable tuition at
23 our state-supported universities and technical colleges and ample funding for research.

24
25 American companies have an obligation to our nation to be established here at home, follow
26 our labor and environmental laws and pay taxes for the good of the commons. Furthermore,
27 we must protect our industries from competition by enforcing tariffs against nations that
28 tolerate unfair worker conditions and environmental degradation.

29
30 All products sold by vendors at Democratic Party functions must be marked made in America or
31 union made.

32
33 Our wealth should be measured not only by the GDP but also by broad measures of well-being,
34 such as the United Nations Human Development Index, that incorporate factors like health,
35 education, literacy, employment and wages and environmental quality.

36 37 38 **Agriculture and Environment**

39
40 We must preserve family farming by creating market systems that assure a fair return to both
41 farmers and processors. True Cooperatives and family farm subsidies are essential to the
42 economic viability and quality of life in rural areas. In addition we support value-added
43 agriculture which includes farming endeavors outside traditional forms of agriculture. Price
44 supports for non-owner operated farms should be eliminated.

45
46 We encourage legislators and Democratic Party leaders to support farming systems that are
47 humane to animals, preserve our soil, water and forest resources, and produce wholesome,
48 safe food for consumers. We support agricultural sustainability through growth in "buy fresh

1 buy local" practices which insure markets for local farmers and save fuel by eliminating costly
2 transport. We also support truth in labeling of conventional, organic, and genetically modified
3 food.

4
5 Protecting the ecological systems of our planet is essential to the economic and social welfare
6 of our state and nation and to the future of humanity. Our legislators and leaders must pay
7 heed to soil, water, and atmospheric pollution; scientific evidence of global warming; invasive
8 species; and decreasing biodiversity while enacting appropriate legislation to safeguard our
9 environment. We must maintain the integrity of the vast fresh water supply in the Great Lakes.

10
11 We must reduce greenhouse gases by developing alternative and sustainable fuels and energy
12 sources; increase production of fuel-efficient vehicles; reduce urban sprawl onto prime
13 agricultural soils; improve and expand local, regional and national mass transportation systems;
14 and increase recycling and waste management, all while maintaining biodiversity. We will
15 restore responsible environmental regulations affecting open space, wilderness areas, soil
16 conservation, forest management, toxic and hazardous waste disposal and cleanup and
17 watershed protection. We call for the use of advanced technology and environmentally-friendly
18 practices to be implemented in industrial settings and mining natural resources and the
19 enforcement and strengthening of safety regulations. To ensure the protection of our state's
20 valuable natural resources, we support the re-establishment of a Public Intervener's Office and
21 an independent Department of Natural Resources.

22 23 24 **Foreign Affairs**

25
26 We stand for human rights, social and economic justice, the rule of law, and popularly adopted
27 democratic government worldwide. Our leaders must honor international law and honor and
28 promote international agreements that provide groundwork for a just, prosperous,
29 environmentally healthy, and peaceful world. Our United Nations dues must be fully paid.

30
31 We call on our government to be a cooperative and effective leader, a partner in the pursuit of
32 global accords to improve the human condition and protect the environment. We encourage
33 international efforts to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, discrimination, genocide,
34 torture, genital mutilation, human slavery and trafficking, capital punishment, pollution, and
35 global warming. We support expansion of the Peace Corps.

36
37 We oppose unfair trade and immigration policies that undermine our economy, harm working
38 people in our country and elsewhere, and harm the environment.

39
40 We oppose unfettered international arms trade, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, land
41 mines, radioactive materials in conventional munitions, ballistic missile defense systems, cluster
42 bombs, militarization of space, American-run internment camps and torture.

43
44 We support a strong military as essential to our security and providing amply for the health and
45 well-being of members of the military after their service.

1 War must always be a last resort. We must address the grievances that foster terrorism rather
2 than fight wars that perpetuate them. All in our Government and military must abide by the
3 Geneva Conventions.

4
5 Preemptive war without direct threat to our country and the continued occupation of Iraq are
6 fraudulent, illegal, and disastrous. The occupation diverts our attention from defeating
7 terrorists in Afghanistan and is killing or maiming tens of thousands of our military and millions
8 of innocent Iraqis, contributing to devastation of our economy, encouraging terrorism, and
9 undermining our credibility and standing in the world. We must end our occupation of Iraq.
10 Congressional action to stop funding it is long overdue.

11
12 The bulk of today's dangerous misdirection in our foreign affairs and turmoil undermining our
13 military strength is due to individuals at the highest levels of our government who disdain our
14 Constitution and the rule of law. Therefore we call upon Congress to begin impeachment
15 proceedings immediately against President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and former Secretary
16 of Defense Rumsfeld and that they investigate and prosecute all members of the Bush
17 Administration who have exceeded their office.

18
19 We support leaders with vision and values who will uphold our Constitution, reverse the failures
20 and illegalities of Bush's administrations, and regain the global community's admiration for our
21 country.

22 23 24 **Conclusion**

25
26 The membership of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin has crafted and adopted this platform.
27 Our state and our country will become stronger and better by following the principles outlined
28 herein. We expect all candidates supported by the Democratic Party to support this Platform
29 and, when elected, to work to implement it.