

2010 Jefferson County Democratic Party Platform

Preamble

Jefferson County Democrats put people first. We advocate for the common good. We stand for freedom, opportunity, and integrity. We believe the job of all elected officials is to make people's lives better. We are committed to ensuring the well-being and opportunity of each person in our county, our state and our nation.

Ensuring people's well-being means that all Coloradoans must be secure in their homes, in their workplace, in their schools, in their streets, and wherever they may gather. It means that we must have universal healthcare and provide social programs to provide a safety net to help the least able among us. It means we must learn that waging war is not the best solution to all of our world's problems.

Ensuring people's well-being means we must fully fund public education, the cornerstone of the American Dream. We must preserve the natural beauty and resources of our county and our state, and work towards a sustainable world while encouraging a strong economy with jobs that enable families to support themselves with dignity. Maintaining a state minimum living wage ensures a higher quality of life for our entire community.

Ensuring the opportunity of others is possible only when we protect the civil rights and privacy of all people. Only when elections are free and fair, when the checks and balances between the three branches of government protect us from unbridled ambitions, and when every person counts, can we have confidence in our government and the continued well-being and opportunity for our community.

We embrace Governor Ritter's vision for a "New Energy Economy" and support the creation of the "Colorado Renewable Energy Collaboratory," a formal collaboration that will work towards a shared vision to make Colorado a recognized leader in the world in reliable, secure, clean and economically viable energy resources and technologies.

Jefferson County Democrats embrace these values, and in acknowledgement that each individual's priorities may differ wish to advise that the order of the following statements is not intended to imply any sort of ranking by importance.

A. Sustainable World

Democrats believe that a clean, healthy, and sustainable world is vital both for today and the future. Environmental stewardship requires foresight, wisdom, and responsibility. We call for the preservation of critical environmental protections.

We recognize that growth and transportation constitute an integrally linked and complex system. We believe that transportation policy has important impacts on our environment and our quality of life. We urge policymakers at all levels of government to consider transportation when evaluating the environmental impacts of development and to promote and fund alternative modes of transportation when they enhance air quality and reduce congestion. Current environmental protections must be strictly enforced, and fines for polluters must be increased to exceed the cost of compliance.

We believe global warming is a major threat to our security. It is imperative to rapidly shift our economy to a sustainable one based on energy efficiency and clean renewable energy production.

Public Resources

We believe that the public has a right to be fully informed about and to participate in decisions regarding the management of public resources. We value our shared resources and hold our elected representatives responsible for efficient management in a publicly accountable manner.

We believe that public resources such as our national forests and parks, clean air and water, and the Earth's complex ecosystem cannot be easily measured in economic terms. Since the value of these resources far exceeds their perceived market value, they must be protected in perpetuity for the common good of future generations.

We support the development of methods that accurately measure the real costs of pollution clean-up and associated human illness.

We urge the reestablishment of a Committee for Environmental Conservation, independent from the Legislatures' Agriculture Committees, in order to reflect the critical importance of protecting Colorado's natural resources.

Growth Management

We believe that local government should seek to balance growth with thoughtful zoning, open space protection, growth containment policies, and should educate the public about these issues.

We believe that rapid growth must be addressed through an enforceable, comprehensive approach to our transportation system, land use patterns and balanced rural and urban economic development.

We support public involvement in the planning process at all levels of government.

We believe that local governments must develop and implement enforceable policies of cooperation and regional planning, and cooperate to prevent competition for local sales tax revenue.

Business growth can and must be achieved in an environmentally friendly manner. We support sustainable economic development.

We believe that the price of newly developed property should fully reflect the cost of sewers, roads, schools, public transportation, protection of biodiversity, water, and other infrastructure demands.

We do not support developers being allowed to simply pass these costs on to the general community.

We believe that local government must enforce all zoning regulations and seek adherence to Master and Community Plans.

We support protecting private property owners' rights and oppose the abuse of eminent domain.

Land

We encourage the Jefferson County Commissioners to maintain the accelerated acquisition of Open Space lands and to actively pursue ways to preserve the Mountain Backdrop along the Front Range, including South Table Mountain, for open space purposes.

We encourage public and private efforts to buy open space and support coordinated regional and state control of growth and open space acquisition.

America's wetlands are a critical component in the complex web of sustainable, healthy ecosystems, and must be rigorously protected.

We believe that cost-effective environmental protection and hazardous waste site clean up are a sound investment in a strong Colorado economy and safeguarding its citizens' health, welfare and quality of life.

We believe that government agencies, businesses, organizations or individuals who have caused a site to become contaminated should be held responsible for its clean up.

We oppose the increased economic exploitation of national parks, monuments, forests and wilderness areas. We oppose selling public lands, and leasing public lands at minimal rates.

We support increasing Colorado's severance tax rate on the extraction of mineral and other natural resources to levels more comparable to similar taxes in our neighboring states. A portion of these new funds should be used as a funding source for developing alternative and renewable energy technologies.

We support studies to determine equitable and environmentally responsible guidelines for managing access to state and national parks and monuments. Public lands are a national treasure, and must be funded and stewarded in ways that will preserve them for future generations of Americans and ensure the survival of plant and animal ecosystems.

We support efforts to explore innovative ways to increase revenues generated from School Trust Lands to restore funding to public education while also protecting our natural resources and the environment.

We support notification of public entities of tax sale properties for their review prior to public notice of the sale.

Transportation

We support effective transportation systems to meet the diverse needs of our communities. These systems should be viewed as a cost of growth, and be fully reflected in the price of development.

We believe public transit should be expanded, including rail, light rail, and bus rapid transit, especially in under-served communities. Effective transportation should include integrated, multi-modal links between local, regional, and national transportation systems. Road projects should only be one component.

Colorado must vigorously pursue increased Urban Mass Transit funding from the federal government.

We support the continued expansion and integration of bike and pedestrian trail systems throughout Jefferson County and the Metro area.

We support the development and use of mass transit in the I-70 mountain corridor.

Water

We support statewide strategic water planning, and the consideration of water availability in all planning decisions.

We believe policies must prioritize water conservation, management of limited water supplies, and the protection of water purity for humans and natural ecology.

We support clean water legislation that protects America's waters by ensuring that all U.S. waterways continue to be safeguarded by the Clean Water Act, and which will restore the erosion of the Clean Water Act's scope of power.

We believe government should not allow new development without adequate supplies of water.

We oppose trans-basin diversions at the expense of the basin-of-origin's economy and environment.

We support the preservation of minimum stream flows in our wilderness areas, state and national forests, and other public lands to preserve the existing ecosystems.

We support efforts to educate and inform the public about water issues.

We support the use of gray water and the reuse of water for irrigation purposes, rather than using potable water.

Air

We must seek significant reductions in the emission of air pollutants and must strengthen and vigorously enforce regulations.

We support air quality protection efforts and urge the repeal of the Clear Sky Initiative, which guts critical air quality protection efforts.

We are committed to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and support strict pollution limits on all sources of pollution. The United States should sign and ratify and adhere to the Kyoto Protocols on Global Warming.

We support the California Clean Car Initiative.

Wildlife and Habitat

We support the protection of wildlife and the preservation and expansion of interconnected habitat areas, road less lands, and wilderness.

We oppose resource exploration and exploitation in wilderness areas.

Forests

We must end the exploitation of our public natural resources. Forest management and protection must be based on scientifically sound policies.

We support recognition of the importance of forests worldwide to the health of our climate, our planet, and our future. Commercial activity on public lands must be consistent with sustainable healthy forests.

We believe that healthy forests protect healthy watersheds, and are an integral component of healthy, sustainable ecosystems.

Agriculture

We share the concern of most Coloradoans about the impact of growth on our state. We believe in balancing the needs for open space and recreation with preserving agriculture as a traditional base of Colorado's economy.

We support significant reductions in waste runoff and the use of pesticides, herbicides, chemical fertilizers, antibiotics, and growth hormones. We support sustainable and organic farming methods, and family owned and operated farms.

We support the legalization of non-psychoactive hemp production.

We oppose the imposition of federal laws which gut state laws governing food safety, particularly at the behest of corporate lobbyists who represent the interests of the food industry over the safety of the public. We further oppose the politicization of public safety agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), to subvert public safety standards through such corporate-sponsored legislation and other related activities.

Sustainable Energy Policy

We support the development of renewable and alternative sources of energy sufficient to supply 20% of Colorado's power needs from renewable sources by 2020.

We believe that federal and state and private investment in renewable and alternative energy research must be expanded immediately and maintained at a high level to ensure sustainable energy production for our planet's future.

Conservation must be a significant component of responsible energy policy. We support the use of renewable and alternative energy, improved techniques for energy efficiency, and the use of more energy-efficient construction methods and materials.

We support adoption of "Green Energy" building code standards that utilize energy conservation, efficiency and sustainability principles to accomplish large savings in energy usage. Spending only slightly more money using these principles will yield large savings over the life of a building.

To lessen our fossil fuel dependence, we support re-directing the current federal energy subsidies to renewable energy sources. The current subsidies to fossil fuel producers could be phased out to allow oil and coal companies to retool and retrain their workers to begin developing fuel cells, wind farms, and solar systems.

We support funding for all modes of public transportation, particularly those that utilize efficient alternative energies.

We support efforts to require manufacturers to produce street vehicles that achieve mileage rates of 40 mpg (city) or better.

We support aggressively promoting, funding, and legislating solar, wind, and geothermal power and bio fuels for U.S. homes, businesses and transportation.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO)

We support limitations on genetically engineered organisms (GMO) pending completion of sound, scientific research on their safety and long-term impacts on health and the environment.

We call for full disclosure of all ingredients, especially genetically engineered organic substances in commercial products.

We should ensure fairness to farmers and ranchers in their dealings with biotech companies that sell genetically engineered seeds, plants, and animals.
 We call for a moratorium on open-air field trials of pharmaceutical-producing food crops.
 We believe that biotech companies should be held liable for damage and injuries due to the release of genetically engineered organisms into the environment.
 We believe that all GMO products must be fully labeled.

Recycling

We call for efforts to promote or require the recycling of all reclaimable materials in Colorado and across our nation.
 We support measures to promote or require alternative methods of disposal of organic residue such as grass, yard clippings, tree trimmings, and similar materials. We support legislation to phase out plastic drink and food containers through the substitution of biodegradable containers.

Education and Research

We believe that significant funding must be available for environmental education in schools and for the general public. We must increase support and funding for research of conservation methods, more efficient use of energy, renewable energy, recycling, and environmental innovation.
 We believe that government must be open and responsive to the recommendations and insights of the scientific community.

B. Economics

We are committed to providing opportunities for all Coloradoans to achieve economic success. Democrats should lead cooperative efforts between business and government to enhance the stability of small, home-based and start-up businesses.
 We support the formation and success of businesses owned by women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities.
 We insist that all businesses be accountable to the common good.

Fiscal Responsibility - Colorado

We recognize the importance of tax-supported government services in our state. In difficult economic times when the common good is most at-risk, we need fiscal policy that does not slash services to those most in need.
 We support the restoration of funding to state programs cut during times of financial adversity in the areas of health, education and transportation.
 We urge the State Legislature not to enact any new tax cuts, as they undercut important state programs, lower our funding base, and undermine the ability of Referendum C to accomplish its objectives.
 We believe accountability procedures for programs that receive government money should be instituted with appropriate oversight and multi-level review and mechanisms for reporting fraud.

Fiscal Responsibility and the National Debt

We support a return to federal fiscal responsibility and a strong monetary policy that will reduce the national debt, restore our country's long-term financial stability, and safeguard our children's future.

We believe responsible government spending must include as a high priority the preservation and long term solvency of our Social Security system and such programs as Medicare, Medicaid, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). We oppose the privatization of Social Security.

We call for the disclosure of the actual costs of military spending and funding through their inclusion in the annual federal budget as opposed to "supplemental" funding bills.

Taxes

Democrats are realists who know that in order to receive the services and benefits that we want government to provide for us, revenues must come into government in the form of taxes. We support a progressive tax system and would oppose any movement toward a flat tax that favors the very wealthy.

We call for the repeal or the expiration of the Bush Administration's income tax cuts for upper income Americans.

We urge that the cap on Social Security payroll tax be removed.

The estate tax is the only significant federal tax on accumulated wealth. We believe that the estate tax is an essential part of a fair and balanced tax system, and must be preserved. There is an exemption built into the law that is specifically designed to exclude family-owned farms from estate taxes. We support reasonable reforms that allow these legacies to remain, but also preserves the principle of a tax on inheritances.

We support the allocation of increased funding and staff for the Internal Revenue Service to allow for collection of unpaid taxes and to increase the frequency of corporate auditing.

Corporate Responsibility

Although we recognize the economic value of some government subsidies to serve the public good, we call for the elimination of subsidies that are best categorized as corporate welfare. Government subsidies should only be used to promote the public good, such as creating jobs in a depressed economy.

We call for the repeal of Colorado and federal laws that provide special, unequal protection from lawsuits for corporations such as major pharmaceutical manufacturers, medical providers, the tobacco industry, and Colorado homebuilders.

We believe that government regulation of industry is essential for the common good. Federal regulatory agencies must provide and enforce adequate safeguards for the people and the environment rather than looking first to the interests of the industries they were created to regulate.

We believe that regulatory agencies must receive adequate funding and staffing levels to enforce the law. We believe that industries must not be allowed to write the legislation that affects them.

We do not support state and federal governments providing incentives to corporations to move their businesses abroad.

U.S. based multi-national corporations must be held accountable for human rights abuses committed in their factories and subsidiaries in this and other countries.

We support strong anti-trust laws and their enforcement. Corporations must be accountable to the common good, receptive of public oversight, and must pay their full share of taxes.

We believe that the longstanding practice of extending the same rights and privileges to corporations as to individuals should be rescinded.

U.S. corporate earnings should be taxed at the same rate whether earned at home or abroad.

C. Economic Opportunity, Fairness and Justice

Democrats support government that promotes economic justice for all. We affirm our support for the working families of Colorado. We urge the State Legislature to fully fund programs for seniors, children, families, people with disabilities, and individuals with limited financial resources. We believe the Colorado Legislature should amend state law to reduce the inequities between the self-employed or small business and large business, regarding the availability and affordability of health insurance, worker's compensation insurance and access to capital.

People Who Are Economically Disadvantaged

We support programs that provide Coloradans access to the basic necessities of life including adequate medical care, shelter, nutrition, education, job training, and a fair living wage.

Individuals among the working poor should be encouraged and assisted with improving their quality of life through publicly funded programs for basic needs such as child care, housing, and job training. We support a gradual reduction of public assistance as individuals become increasingly able to support themselves.

We believe that "payday" and short-term lenders should be regulated under state and federal banking regulations. We condemn the victimization of economically disadvantaged individuals through unreasonably high interest rates and fees.

Labor

We believe that all workers have a fundamental right to assemble, organize, bargain collectively, and jointly petition businesses and government for better working conditions.

We support legislation, including the Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA), which ensures that all workers will receive equal pay for work that is comparable in terms of skill, effort and responsibility, regardless of gender, race, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation.

We support the right of workers to pay union and professional membership dues through payroll deductions.

We recognize that a well-educated and well-trained work force will enhance America's competitiveness in the global economy. We support increased funding for education, training, and demand the restoration of all funding cut from the National Civilian Conservation Corps, and AmeriCorps funding. It is imperative for the well-being of all

that these programs are adequately funded and continue to be fully available to all people, especially those with low income.

We support an adjusted poverty-line threshold that provides a reasonable quality of life, including sufficient food, shelter, health care, educational opportunities, child care, transportation, and leisure.

We urge the Colorado Legislature to maintain a state minimum wage that provides a fair living wage.

We oppose any attempt to abolish or undermine the Public Employees Retirement Act (PERA). The PERA Board should continue to be comprised of those who have a direct stake in the health of PERA. Any changes necessary to ensure the actuarial health of PERA should be done with the consent of its membership.

Worker Protection

We support the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and urge the repeal of the Bush Administration's 2004 "Fair Pay" regulations, which changed the FLSA's overtime regulations and redefined "exempt" employees, making millions of workers ineligible for overtime pay.

We advocate guaranteeing a safe and healthy workplace for all workers by maintaining the Occupational Safety Health Administration (OSHA), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), the Mine Safety Administration (MSA), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and other similar agencies with restored funding for enforcement and training.

We endorse restoring majority rule for union certification, the right to strike without fear of retribution and prohibiting the hiring of permanent replacements in strikes or giving preferential status to workers who cross picket lines. We oppose any form of "Work for Less" laws and initiatives, as their intent is to weaken workers' rights. We also oppose the privatization of postal services and all anti-worker initiatives or legislation proposed in Colorado or at the national level.

We believe that retirement pension funds should be rigorously protected for the future financial security of all workers, without penalty to current plans.

National Guard Reservist jobs must be protected for the duration of their active service in Iraq and other war zones. We support providing tax credits to businesses that employ Guard Reservists who are activated for service.

We advocate that members of the Colorado State Legislature be guaranteed through legislation the right to return to their previous employment with their status and seniority intact.

We support classified State employees and their civil service protections as currently provided for in the State Constitution.

We demand the strict enforcement of the child labor laws throughout Colorado. We encourage employers to implement practices for the safety and protection of minor employees.

Fair Trade

We believe that fair trade requires respect for the life, health, and dignity of all people on the planet. Water rights and water systems cannot be privatized by multi-national corporations. Community access to sustenance crops cannot be limited through

patenting by multi-national corporations. We have the right as a sovereign nation to establish laws regarding the behavior of American corporations abroad and foreign corporations in the United States.

We support only those free trade agreements that guarantee worker protections such as the right to organize, a grievance process with open third-party oversight, safe working conditions, length of the workday, a reasonable living wage, environmental protections and limitations on child-labor.

We call for the review of all existing trade agreements to ensure that our trade partners are living up to their labor and environmental obligations and that they are enforceable and balanced for America's workers. We call for a moratorium on all future trade agreements until this review is complete.

We oppose any proposals for a super highway out of Mexico into the United States without adequate protection of American workers, our national security, and highway safety.

Indian Trust Fund

We believe that the federal government must continue to make honest, genuine efforts to halt the long standing corruption and mismanagement by the U.S. Department of the Interior of the Indian Trust Fund and assure fair and just payment of all past, present and future royalties due to Native American beneficiaries for the use of their lands and resources.

D. Social Opportunity, Fairness and Justice

We support government that promotes social justice for all. Ensuring people's well-being and opportunity means we must protect the civil rights and privacy of each individual for the common good. We urge the State Legislature to fully fund programs for seniors, children, families, people with disabilities, and individuals with limited financial resources. Improving the lives of the most vulnerable among us improves the quality of life of our entire community.

Privacy and Security

We believe that our government's duty to protect its citizens includes a duty to protect each citizen's privacy. The government has no legitimate authority to intrude into the private lives of individuals who have not displayed evidence of being a threat to the security of others.

We denounce the use of domestic electronic surveillance without the strictest court oversight, and believe it is unconstitutional and contrary to the Bill of Rights. We support adherence to the Federal Intelligence Security Act (FISA).

We oppose offering immunity to phone companies for providing phone records to the government.

We believe the American people must stand united in common defense against global threats while ensuring that individual civil liberties and democratic principles are not circumscribed.

We call for the repeal of the Patriot Act, and urge Congress and the President to fight terrorism while being mindful of the very rights and freedoms we are fighting to protect.

We believe all medical decisions and medical information about an individual are matters of privacy that may not be breached by any government or private entity, whether within the U.S. or abroad.

Women's Rights

We believe that women are entitled to the full rights and privileges, public or private, legal or institutional that are available in the United States.

We support efforts to address the current inequities between men and women.

We support strong U.S. leadership and active participation in international efforts to improve conditions for and eliminate abuses of women and children across the planet.

We support a woman's right to choose, and strongly oppose the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

Reproductive choice is a private matter between a woman and her doctor. It is not the province of any other person, private entity, or the government.

We oppose any legislation or initiative that would restrict a woman's right of access to abortion. Such restriction is a violation of privacy. This right of privacy should not be abridged by a requirement for notification or consent from spouse, parents or guardians. No female should be forced to undergo an abortion against her will.

We oppose legislation, such as that passed and signed into law in South Dakota and introduced in Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Georgia, and Tennessee that changes state law to make abortion illegal and/or to prosecute individuals who assist women to cross state borders to obtain a legal abortion in another state.

We oppose any ballot initiatives that define "personhood" as a fertilized egg, and extending constitutional protection from the moment of conception with regard to rights of life, liberty, equality of justice and due process of law. We believe such initiatives are an attempt to undermine a woman's right to choose, to make abortion illegal in Colorado, and to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

We feel all women should have access to emergency contraception (the "morning-after pill"), birth control, and birth control information. Pharmacists should not be allowed to limit this access. We must ensure that prescription birth control is covered equally with other prescription drugs, such as Viagra.

Discrimination and Affirmative Action

We believe in equal protection under the law. We believe that all people are created equal. It is therefore imperative that our laws fully protect the equality of every individual residing in the United States regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religious affiliation and physical or mental differences.

Non-white and poor children born in the United States do not yet enjoy equal access to preschool and early childhood development programs, quality schools, and other critical education and career development resources. Therefore, we support affirmative action programs and public assistance programs to enhance equal access.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Issues

We support civil unions for same-sex couples with all the benefits, protections and responsibilities of married spouses.

We call for the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act.

We oppose any Amendment to either the Colorado or U.S. Constitution that discriminates against or denies civil rights to any person.

We support legislation that:

Provides for second-parent and co-parent adoption rights for the benefit of the children;

Extends basic protections such as health insurance, employment benefits, hospital visitation rights, property rights and pension coverage, to the GLBT community;

Expands the current definition of civil rights and hate crime laws to include sexual orientation and gender identity under civil rights and hate crimes laws and prevention efforts;

Promotes training about hate crimes and the reporting of hate crimes.

We call for the abolition of discriminatory policies and practices within the military based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

We support legislation and policy that extends true asylum to GLBT immigrants who would face persecution from their home country's government due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Church and State

We believe in the separation of church and state. Separation of church and state must be maintained in regard to faith-based services and the posting or display of the Ten Commandments or similar religious icons.

To avoid conflicts in the separation of church and state, we believe that social services provided by faith-based organizations should be privately funded.

We believe that our government should not measure the worth of a citizen by religious beliefs.

We support the right of students to express their religious faith in a non-disruptive manner while at school. We oppose religious harassment and coercion.

Crime and Justice

We believe we need a fair justice system combined with prevention programs that give productive alternatives to those most likely to commit crimes, especially young people. We are particularly concerned about crimes by and against children.

We urge a statewide approach that links family, school and social institutions and the general community in the prevention, detection, and prosecution of crime.

We support violence prevention, drug education, and dispute resolution. Programs in schools dealing with these issues have proven to be effective in reducing violence among children and we encourage their continuation and expansion.

We oppose the implementation of DNA testing for arrests without a court order.

We feel the Juvenile Court, and not the prosecutor's office, should determine when it is appropriate for a juvenile to be tried as an adult.

We support re-evaluation of the "drug war" and mandatory sentencing. The drug war and mandatory sentencing have resulted in the overpopulation of prisons with non-violent criminals and the early release of violent criminals and have also drained financial resources away from important state responsibilities such as quality public education, healthcare and job training.

We support alternative sentencing programs and providing voluntary drug treatment and rehabilitation services.

We believe there should be greater uniformity in the prosecution and punishment of capital offenses across the United States.

We support the Brady law, the ban on semi-automatic weapons, and measures to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. We oppose making concealed weapon permits more readily available. The mechanism to conduct background checks should be available to private parties as well as licensed dealers.

We support increased cooperation and training between federal and local agencies in issues related to witness protection.

We support the enforcement of rigorous penalties, commensurate with civilian penalties, for assaults on military personnel by other military personnel.

We support efforts to “decriminalize” mental illness and to identify mental illness as such so it can be treated as a medical condition and not merely as a crime.

Families and Children

We believe that the needs of families and children must be fully considered in all government policies. All families deserve equal application of the law to provide stability, respect, and equal benefits to facilitate the preservation of their diverse family units.

We support quality day care for children that is both professionally skilled and affordable. We urge county governments to provide childcare funding to families qualified for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). We urge private businesses to offer day care for their employees' children whenever possible.

We support affordable housing in all parts of Colorado with affordable day care in close proximity. We support the creation of a statewide Housing Trust Fund to provide needed housing for low-income workers, individuals with disabilities, seniors, young adults, and others with modest means.

We support continued efforts to create new housing units over the next decade especially for low-income renters and owners, and focus on low-income households in mixed-income neighborhoods.

We believe that the federal and state government must crack down on domestic violence. Children deserve to have homes that are safe and nurturing. We will oppose any attempts to weaken laws that protect children from violence of any origin. We encourage the establishment and maintenance of shelters for victims of domestic violence and want education and rehabilitation programs for violent offenders.

We support the funding for training of all new police recruits, experienced officers and prosecutors in the issues surrounding domestic violence and mandatory reporting by physicians, teachers and social workers of suspected child abuse or neglect. Abusers must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, recognizing that both children and parents must be afforded due process.

We advocate the creation of and the financial support of programs that will help children to get the best possible start in life while giving parents the tools they need to raise their children in a nurturing and safe environment.

We believe that services for child and family should be delivered through a system of care that values family participation, individualized care, cultural sensitivity, blended funding streams, a wide array of services provided in the least restricted environment, and coordination between agencies and the use of natural supports.

We support efforts to improve foster children programs. Children should be given foster care within their home county, when appropriate.

Citizens with Disabilities

We support full and immediate implementation and enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA), to provide improved access to housing, transportation, medical assistance, education, and employment opportunities. We believe that we must develop more opportunities for individuals with disabilities through more accessible systems of cost-effective community-based services including services to those people with developmental disabilities. The waiting list for care must be eliminated.

We urge the participation of people with disabilities in policy making bodies in issues that may involve them.

We believe that the ADAAG guidelines established by the Federal Access Board under the ADA and the ABA should be extended to include construction of all new housing. In order to allow individuals with temporary or long-term disabilities to get around within their own home and to visit the homes of others, we support legislation requiring every new home to be built to include at least one zero-step entrance, all main floor interior doors, including bathrooms, must allow 32 inches of clear passage space, and at least a half bath on the main floor must provide enough space to maneuver a wheelchair.

Complaints about retaliation against people with disabilities must be taken seriously. We support reporting retaliation to the appropriate authorities for a swift and just resolution.

We support vouchers that allow individuals with disabilities to choose between home care or care in an institution for their health and long-term care needs. The administration of health care should be self-directed whenever possible, and should be guided by the concept of “nothing about me without me.”

We support efforts to extend workers’ rights to caregivers.

Seniors and At-Risk-Adults

We believe that disabled individuals and seniors who are at-risk must receive the full protection of the law, including hate crime laws. We must ensure their right to maintain independent living.

Veterans

We support protecting and maximizing veterans’ benefits. We support protecting veterans in particular by providing superior health care and medical answers that are based in truth. We support stopping the erosion of promised benefits valiantly earned by this country’s veterans.

We support policies that fully fund VA hospitals and other veterans’ benefits.

We believe that the military should allow military personnel to choose to remain on active duty following recovery from serious injury.

Immigration

America needs immigration policies that are fair and safe. We are a diverse nation built by people from all parts of the world who are here because they believe in freedom, democracy, and justice. Immigration is central to our nation’s history, as almost all of us are immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.

We support allowing immigration reform to remain in the hands of Congress and not in the Colorado General Assembly.

We call for reforming and fully funding border enforcement to ensure that only legal immigrants can enter the country.

We support comprehensive immigration reform including streamlining Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to make visa applications proceed in a timely manner, enforcing existing laws applicable to businesses, and other efforts to simplify and streamline the process through which business may sponsor an immigrant for a visa.

We support immigration and visa regulations wherein HIV/AIDS status is not considered as a sole criterion for the refusing of visas or viable immigrant status including where political asylum is involved.

We reject the demonizing of immigrants whether legal or illegal and urge Congress to enact legislation that respects human rights.

E. Foreign Policy, Defense and National Security

We believe that the greatest threat to national security is a foreign policy that imposes unwelcome burdens and requirements on other nations based on our superior economic or military power. The U.S. government must redirect its actions toward policies that are appropriate for American interests, respectful of the sovereignty of foreign nations, sensitive to our impact on other citizens and their environment, and which promote peace and security for all. We share our country and this planet with diverse cultures and religions. We recognize that we have limited space and resources, and commit ourselves to work with all nations toward the common goal of a humane and sustainable future.

American Leadership

We believe the United States should restore the multilateral engagement strategies that have protected vital American interests. Within the community of nations, the United States should provide leadership toward enhancement of collective security, regional alliances, protection of human rights, nation-building, crisis management, diplomatic arbitration, environmental protection and cleanup, energy conservation, family planning, education, humanitarian assistance, and reassessment of trade policies.

We believe the U.S. should take a leadership role in the development of policies domestically and internationally that are sensitive to worldwide inequities in resource distribution and use, and that prioritize the long-term environmental security of the planet.

Regaining International Respect

Diplomacy, not war, should be the first option for dealing with conflicts between nations.

We believe it is crucial to honor existing international treaties and to repair collective security relations with our traditional allies and the United Nations through renewed diplomatic initiatives and engagement. We must restore trust in the intentions and the character of the American government.

We support the active participation of the United States in creating a healthy global environment. We believe that the United States should fully support the United Nations, including the full payment of dues, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including the International Court of Justice.

We must respect the right of other nations to determine their own form of government.

The Roots of Terrorism

We believe the global threat of international terrorism must be attacked at its source through the reduction of poverty, ignorance, ethnic disputes, resource limitations, and extremism. Extremism is best fought by giving hope, eliminating injustice, lifting the blinders of ignorance, and promoting mutual respect that leaves no room for demonizing those from other cultures.

We strongly oppose passage of H.R 1955, the Violent Radicalization and Homegrown Terrorism Prevention Act of 2007, which expands the scope of the Patriot Act and threatens our First Amendment and other basic rights.

Human Rights

We believe that all humans are endowed with the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that governments exist to secure these rights. We believe that these rights do not depend on citizenship in any particular country. The community of nations has a moral duty to act, with full international cooperation, when there is clear evidence of severe abuse of citizens by a government, or a corporation, or acts of genocide.

We support the humane treatment of all prisoners and oppose the use of torture under any circumstance, and call for full compliance to the Geneva Convention and habeas corpus for all prisoners and detainees. We call for access to all prisoners by international agencies such as the United Nations and the Red Cross.

We call for the immediate closure of the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and condemn the use of rendition to move prisoners to other countries that endorse the use of torture.

We condemn the use of weapons that impact civilian populations and our own military personnel, such as land mines, cluster bombs, and depleted uranium.

We believe that the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), formerly known as the School of the Americas (SOA), located at Fort Benning, Georgia, should cease to be funded by United States taxpayer dollars and closed forever – not moved, not renamed, but closed.

National Defense

We support a firm, measured response to genuine threats at home and abroad in coordination with friends, allies, collective security organizations, and the United Nations. We believe that the U.S. Armed Forces must possess the leadership, capabilities and sufficient resources to defend our vital interests around the world.

We support competitive pay for personnel in our armed forces.

We oppose the militarization of space and the reckless pursuit of defense systems with dubious, untested merit.

We must reduce the U.S. military budget because it drains resources away from essential domestic programs.

We believe that the Pentagon must provide body armor, including but not limited to headgear that will prevent or reduce brain damage, to all combat and support military personnel prior to their deployment to any war zone.

We oppose the expansion of Fort Carson Army Base to include Pinon Canyon.

No Pre-Emptive War in Iran and Other Nations

We believe the current policy of unilateral preemption, (or “preventative” action) in the absence of genuine threats, tarnishes America’s image abroad, isolates Americans from friends and allies, undermines legitimate multinational concerns, and exacerbates long-term threats to U.S. national security. This policy must end.

We especially urge our elected leaders to insist that the United States not strike pre-emptively against Iran or any sovereign nation unless a declaration of war is voted on and approved by both the House and the Senate. We also call for the full utilization of national intelligence rather than “fixing the intelligence” around the policy of pre-emptive strikes.

Iraq

We call for the immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, the immediate closing of all U.S. bases in Iraq, the ending of all funding of all military operations, and the recognition of the United States’ obligation to reduce the suffering of the Iraqi people brought on by this war and occupation.

We believe the United States must renounce all efforts to privatize Iraq’s public domain.

Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

We believe that the United States should support a just and equitable approach in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including support for a two-state solution.

Cuban Embargo

We call for ending the United States’ embargo on Cuba and normalizing relations.

F. Health Care

The Jefferson County Democratic Party supports universal access to quality health care in the United States through a single payer system. We support providing long-term care, including home-based care, and end of life care. Far too many Colorado residents have no access to health care, including but not limited to medical, dental and mental health care. Our health care system has been crippled by spiraling costs, escalating prices for prescription drugs, severe nursing shortages, and lack of medical care in rural areas. No American should have to choose between buying groceries and paying for their medications.

The Current Health Care System:

We feel that health care (including but not limited to medical, dental and mental health care) should be:

- Affordable for everyone
- Primarily focused on health promotion, public health, and disease prevention.
- Enhanced through personal responsibility for maintaining health.
- Of high quality, delivered according to universal standards that are continuous, timely, effective, efficient, transparent, safe, patient-centered, and equitable.
- Delivered by full and sound funding of Medicare and Medicaid, not through block grants.
- Provided for all uninsured or underinsured Jefferson County and Colorado residents.
- Comprehensively provided for our children.

We support:

- Single payer universal health care that is not tied to employment.
- A revamped, equitable Medicare Prescription Drug Act.
- Prescription drugs being purchased by the state through a collaborative or in bulk at the lowest available price.
- Prescription drugs being delivered through systems that are accessible and helpful, not confusing and costly as is the current Medicare Prescription Drug Act
- A waiver of formulary prescription restrictions for exceptional medical circumstances.
- Increased funding and greater awareness at all levels of government for public health, mental health, and substance abuse treatment, as well as peer based support.
- Portability of employer health insurance until single payer care is available.
- Providing adequate community based mental health services.
- Maintaining the mental health institutes at Fort Logan and Pueblo.
- Legislation that will return medical decisions to the patient and their doctor.
- Full funding by the state for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to maximize our federal funding.
- The use of medical cannabis prescribed for a patient by a physician.
- Making long-term health care affordable and accessible.

We oppose:

- Medical Savings Accounts (MSA) as a substitute for universal health care.

Tobacco

We support the passage of legislation banning smoking in all public places in Colorado, including casinos.

Terminal Illness and Death with Dignity

We believe that terminally ill patients should be given the legal right to choose physician assistance in dying and that health care providers who comply with such a request should be legally protected.

Stem Cell Research

We support research and investigation involving stem cells for the purpose of seeking treatments and cures for heart disease, diabetes, cancer, diseases of the nervous system, such as Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease, and other diseases; and propose that such research for medical purposes be federally funded.

G. Education

We believe that a high quality education is not only a basic right it is also a necessary component of a healthy democracy. People cannot be expected to participate thoughtfully and responsibly if they lack the ability to understand the complex issues facing our county, our country and the world. The United States and Colorado are increasingly involved in a globally competitive economy. Our workforce must have 21st century skills to be innovative and solve the problems of tomorrow. We believe that federal and state

legislation should invest in every student to provide an opportunity to develop his or her potential while providing a world class education and supporting the whole child.

Federal Funding

The current Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA / “No Child Left Behind”) is both punitive and overly burdensome. Federal mandates must be federally funded. We call on the federal government to abolish or significantly revamp the ESEA so that it is supportive of districts, reduces redundant reporting, measures growth over time, supports disadvantaged students, fully funds initiatives and provides multiple pathways for students. Special Education and English Language Acquisition programs also need to be fully funded. Increasing the availability of Pell Grants, scholarships, and low-cost college loans will help to ensure that every student with ability can go to an institution of higher learning. We believe that civic engagement supports democratic ideals and gives youth a way to pay back society.

Colorado Educational Reforms

We support the work of Governor Ritter’s P-20 Council and its intent to study and make recommendations to create a unified comprehensive system of education in Colorado.

We also support the Colorado Constitutional provisions for a thorough and uniform public school education that is locally controlled.

We support educational funding that will bring Colorado up to the national funding average. We call on the Legislature to maximize educational funding through re-examination of state funding limits, funds from severance tax increases and creative uses of the revenues generated by the School Trust Lands.

We oppose unfunded mandates, excessive testing, redundant reporting, and vouchers or tax credits, which divert funds from public school students.

We support fully funding preschool and full-day kindergarten, English Language Acquisition programs, Special Education, Gifted and Talented programs, career and technical education, technology, quality on-line programs, adult literacy, dropout prevention, after-school programs, and capital investment in crumbling schools to provide a safe learning environment.

We believe that K-12 comprehensive curriculum must include academics, the arts, physical education, multicultural education, civic engagement, career education, and health education. Parental involvement is critical for student success. Districts should work cooperatively to provide a broad base of diverse offerings for students whether in college preparation, career and technical/vocational training, as preparation for the 21st century workforce.

We support a review and revamping of the Colorado State Accountability System (CSAP). We recognize that CSAP alone does not adequately represent the quality of our schools.

We support content standards and a state accountability system that emphasizes academic performance rather than seat time to incorporate 21st century and workforce knowledge. Testing should provide student and program evaluation, career planning for individuals and immediate feedback for instruction. Any state accountability system should provide longitudinal measures (growth over time) that enhance student

achievement and communicates useful information to parents, schools, teachers, and communities.

We believe that schools of choice, such as charters and options, should have a positive effect on districts, students, and communities and should provide a unique instructional model that demonstrates success in student growth. Schools of choice should be accountable and should have the same regulations and standards as other public schools. We oppose using any public funds to support students in private or parochial institutions.

Higher Education

We believe that quality higher education promotes economic development and quality of life. Colorado higher education needs to be funded at or above the national average. Capital construction needs, tuition reduction, instructor compensation, and program quality should be adequately funded.

We support equal access to higher education for the economically disadvantaged or students of color. Community colleges need to actively recruit students to meet our state's need for an increasingly specialized workforce.

We believe that academic integrity and freedom of expression for college students, faculty and administration is essential for promoting democracy.

Teacher Training

Teacher training must be ongoing and of the highest quality. It must prepare teachers to meet the diverse needs of their students and close achievement gaps. We feel that instructors should be paid a professional wage based on the quality of their job performance.

We support loan forgiveness programs would encourage teachers to work in the neediest environments.

We believe that teachers' rights to due process should not be weakened. We should continue to require that educators be licensed and that they receive adequate benefits, such as health insurance.

H. Restoring Our Democracy

During the past few decades, special interest groups and wealthy citizens have attained power in the United States grossly disproportionate to their numbers. To ensure the effective functioning of our democratic government, we believe access to power can and should be limited by law when it threatens to disenfranchise significant numbers of ordinary citizens. We believe that trustworthy elections, public funding of campaigns, effective campaign reform, and equal access to public media are essential elements to restoring our democracy. All caucus and voting locations must be accessible in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

We believe effective campaign reform must address the following problems of the current system:

Escalating costs of campaigns are a deterrent to many of our best potential candidates. Others who do run quit after one or two election cycles due to the disproportionate burden of fundraising.

Pursuit of campaign funding detracts our elected officials from attending to the duties of elected office.

Incumbents (and therefore legislation) are demonstrably influenced by major campaign contributors.

Big contributors are much more likely than typical citizens to gain direct access to political leaders.

The perception of unequal access has alienated and disconnected large numbers of average voters.

We also believe:

The concept of super delegates is antithetical of “one person one vote” and should be eliminated.

The election of the President by the Electoral College system is undemocratic and the national popular vote movement is an effective and practical way of returning to democracy. We support restoring the Presidential primary in Colorado while preserving the caucus process essential for grassroots democracy.

Campaign Funding

We support public funding of election campaigns. We recommend using a system such as “Clean Money/Clean Elections” (CMCE) as used in Arizona, Maine, Massachusetts, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Vermont. CMCE provides a specified base amount of funding to any candidate who qualifies by raising a minimum number of small contributions. It encourages candidate participation by providing additional funding to participating candidates if non-participating candidates raise more than the base amount.

Trustworthy Elections

We believe that trustworthy elections are basic to democracy, and that trustworthy elections require that each vote is anonymous, secure, verified by the voter, is counted as intended by the voter and is auditable by a hand count.

We support a voting process that allows voters to hand mark or machine mark their votes onto full-text paper ballots, including voting machines with verifiable paper-trail audits. Voters must be allowed to check their votes before they cast them, to know that the votes on their paper ballot are what get counted, and to have access to proof that every ballot is accounted for and that every vote is correctly understood and counted.

We call for the elimination of computerized voting using secret/ proprietary programs that cannot be audited or independently verified.

We oppose direct recording electronic (DRE) machines without a verifiable paper audit trail, we oppose bar codes to audit or recount votes and we support an audit by a 2% hand count of the paper ballots.

Instant Runoff Voting

We support the adoption of instant runoff voting in races with more than two candidates.

Media

We believe that a free, democratic society is dependent on public access to the full spectrum of political opinion. Media consolidation limits access by giving inordinate

power to a few giant media organizations. The airwaves are public property and must be licensed for use. It is therefore reasonable to expect media outlets to provide benefits for the public good. We believe that steps must be taken to prevent well-funded conglomerates from drowning out diverse voices and views.

Recognizing that the airwaves are public property, we seek to reinstitute equal time requirements, and the principle of fair and balanced reporting. These requirements must provide every qualified candidate with the same quality and quantity of free commercial airtime sufficient for substantial presentation of the issues.

We support media ownership limits and oppose the recent steps taken by the FCC to allow greater market ownership by a single organization.

We feel the FCC licensing process must be simplified to encourage the creation and licensing of new media outlets such as low-power FM radio.

We urge increased government funding for public broadcasting.

We support "internet neutrality" which preserves the free and open internet for all users and prevents internet providers from building a discriminatory, tiered system in which select companies pay higher fees for preferential, faster web communications than other users receive, based on the source, ownership or destination of the information.

Political Reform

We support lengthening the period of Colorado term limits to 12 years to allow office holders to gain more experience and leadership, and to provide greater historical perspective in their decision-making process. We support increased funding for legislative research and support staff.

We encourage a bipartisan transition process at all levels of government following the election of new officials.

We support the abolition of earmarking in legislation.

We support the implementation of laws and regulations mandating transparency in the legislative process including committee work and lobbying activities

We support increasing the number of Jefferson County Commissioners from 3 to 5 elected officials to provide more diverse representation and better serve our growing population.

The Jefferson County Democratic Party is committed to electing candidates who share our values as set forth in this Platform. We dedicate ourselves to electing Democrats to the Presidency, Congress, the Colorado Legislature, the State Board of Education, and to all other statewide and local offices throughout Colorado.