

2006 Platform of the Nebraska Democratic Party

**This platform was adopted on August 20, 2006, by the
State Convention of the Nebraska Democratic Party.**

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Introduction

The Nebraska Democratic Party Platform, the Foundation Statement, and the Permanent Policy Positions File are, in combination, the statement of beliefs that the State Party has adopted as a basis for guiding its actions. They have been adopted by a majority of delegates to the State Convention, and remain in force until the next State Convention. They serve as the repository of accepted positions that the officers and leaders of the Party use when commenting on issues and serve as their guide when they decide upon actions to be taken by the State Party.

These documents in their current form are the result of years of work by Party members collecting, modifying, and refining the ideas that Nebraska Democrats hold to be important.

The Foundation Statement is a summary of the basic principles, the core beliefs, which we as a Party have identified as forming the "foundation" upon which our Platform is constructed. These core beliefs are what distinguish us from other political parties, what identify us as Democrats, and what define who we are.

The Platform itself consists of the positions taken by the Party upon issues of current and immediate interest that are likely to be the subject of current campaigns and political debate.

The Permanent Policy Positions File consists of prior provisions in the Platform that remain the policy and position of the Party just as much as any current Platform plank. We have chosen to retain them in a separate document, preserving them to give us guidance, a compass bearing as we journey into the new Millennium.

We look upon these documents as the living essence of our Party. We are united, even in our disagreements, by the values they evidence, values which we share as we strive for a future Nebraska characterized by justice, equality, prosperity, and peace.

The Democratic Party is the political home of many people who hold a diversity of opinions on many issues. Therefore, these are not consensus documents and cannot be used as a litmus test for Democratic belief. Yet, it is hoped that they will be useful to all Democrats in helping them to review and establish their personal positions on the issues they address and that they will help the public to understand where our Party stands on matters of concern to all Nebraskans.

Preamble

The Nebraska Democratic Party proudly presents its 2006 Platform and related documents.

Our Party is built on a profound optimism that America is and will remain among the powers of the world, forging a humane way of life for all people, and that Nebraskans have the vision and the will to contribute to and participate in that noble enterprise.

We believe in the inspiration of the American dream and the power of our idealism.

We believe in the dignity of the individual and the enormous potential of collective action.

We believe in building, not blocking.

We believe that equitable public education is the cornerstone of our society.

We believe in bridging our differences, not segregating and demeaning one another because of those differences.

We believe in fairness for working Nebraskans; opportunity and caring support for those who are ill, hungry and homeless, unemployed, and those who experience disabilities.

We believe that taxation should be fair, based upon the ability of the taxpayer to pay.

We are the Party of Nebraska's values.

We are the Party of Nebraska's progress.

We are the Party of Nebraska's strength.

We are the Party of Nebraska's vision - the trustees of a better tomorrow.

These documents are our road map to that future.

The 2006 Nebraska Democratic Party Platform

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Foundation Statement

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes in the value and need for a comprehensive national food and fiber policy that protects the long term productivity and quality of our natural resources; protects the quality, safety, and abundance of our food supply; supports and enhances our traditional system of family farmers and ranchers by paying those agricultural producers a fair price in open and competitive markets for the products they raise; and uses fair and profitable prices for family farmers and ranchers as the economic base on which to build and enhance the quality and vitality of life for rural communities and augments the economic health of our state and nation.

Fair Pricing

We believe the solution to depressed farm income is to restore prices in the marketplace to the cost of production, plus a fair return for labor and investment. We believe this can best be accomplished through meaningful supply management as determined by producer referendum, loan rates at a

minimum of ninety percent of parity, and research and development of new domestic uses of crops. We strongly support progressive farm program benefits to multi-family and family farm-sized operations. We support the immediate reinstatement of the Farmers Owned Reserve. Finally, we oppose de-coupled programs that substitute direct payments for price supports tied to production.

Agricultural Exports and Trade

The Nebraska Democratic Party strongly advocates developing U.S. export markets through long-term agreements with our customers, increased funding for the blended credit and Food for Peace programs, and strict U.S. grain quality standards. These standards should not penalize farmers who deliver clean grain to country elevators nor reward grain export companies which adulterate grain by adding foreign material.

Anti-Trust Policy

We support vigorous enforcement of the nation's anti-trust laws that have been largely ignored and un-enforced in the meat packing industry and the Chicago Board of Trade. Such enforcement is necessary if we are to ensure that family farmers have the opportunity to receive fair prices for their products. Our party supports the strong and effective enforcement of all anti-trust laws. Additionally, we support the strong and effective enforcement of the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921 authority of the USDA and call on the USDA to enforce the provisions of that Act that prohibit livestock processors from owning and producing, or controlling livestock production, directly or indirectly.

Agricultural Credit

We support the return of the Farm Service Agency lending programs to their original purpose of providing direct agricultural loans as a lender of last resort as a way of helping beginning farmers.

Agricultural Research

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports publicly sponsored agricultural research, including responsible biotechnological research, to help family-sized farmers compete with larger farms and enable them to reduce the use of farm chemicals and other expensive production aids. We call for a national policy of research and development to find and promote ways to utilize our crops, such as ethanol, ETBE (ethyl tertiary butyl ether), soy and biodiesel fuels, biodegradable plastics, and fructose.

Family Farm Preservation Act

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the effective enforcement of Article 12, Section 8, of the Nebraska Constitution (popularly known as Initiative 300).

Federal Crop Insurance

We favor the mandatory participation of all producers in the federal farm program in a fully-funded federal crop insurance program and the elimination of costly disaster bills.

Conservation Reserve Program

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that the Conservation Reserve Program is one of the few farm programs in the past decade that has worked. Most, if not all, of the front end costs of this program have been paid. Soil and water have been saved. Wildlife has new habitat. We call for the full funding of a continuation of the CRP program at current or increased levels.

Land Use Protection

We believe in good land use planning that protects prime agricultural land from urban sprawl and the depredation of large-scale livestock confinement operations. We believe in county zoning and encourage all ninety-three Nebraska counties to become zoned. We support appropriate technical and financial support from the state government to help counties in their development and use of zoning and planning authority. Finally, we support the granting to Nebraska's counties of additional short-term interim planning and zoning authority.

Civil Rights

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Equal Access

Foundation Statement

Our most cherished legacy as a society is our system's fundamental constitutional recognition of the rights and liberties of individuals. We believe that one of the principal functions of government at all levels is to protect those rights and ensure that their exercise is respected and provided for in all aspects of social intercourse.

As Democrats, we believe in the essential dignity, worth, and equality of every individual.

We believe that there is an obligation for society in all its aspects to respect every individual and recognize him or her as an equal member of the community.

We believe that government has a duty to protect the rights of those individuals, whether they are in the majority or minority, and ensure that their voice is heard in the public forum.

We believe that it is our differences as individuals and the recognition and acceptance of those differences in society which have enriched our culture and made our country so vital and energetic.

As the Nebraska Democratic Party, we perceive it as our duty to be the voice of those who have no voice, the strong arm for those who are weak, the advocate for the powerless, and the defender of those who are most vulnerable. It is our duty to give them their own voice. We believe that our society can only be judged by how we treat the poorest and least regarded of our fellow citizens.

As Democrats we honor our forebears and their legacy to us of one of the best systems of government that this world has ever known by carrying on their fight for individual rights and the creation of a truly just and equal society.

We support and encourage diversity of representation in all aspects of public and political life.

Universal Dignity

We deplore the denigration of any ethnic/cultural group by organizations or individuals through the use of symbols, mascots, or behavior offensive to that group.

Patriot Act

We oppose all provisions of the USA Patriot Act that infringe upon our constitutionally protected rights.

Affirmative Action

Historically, some people have been excluded from full participation in the economic, social, and educational fabric of the United States by reason of disability, race, gender, national origin, or religion. We support continued affirmative efforts made by employers, community institutions, political parties, and voluntary associations to include as full participants those who have been disadvantaged by reason of such historical actions.

Violence and Extremism

The Nebraska Democratic Party deplores and renounces extremist philosophies and the actions of those individuals and organizations that promote violence,

bigotry, or intolerance. We believe that a decent society must promote a peaceful and orderly exchange of ideas among its members in an atmosphere of common respect for one another in spite of their differences. We oppose those individuals and groups that refuse to respect the rights of individuals in our society and deny them the common respect that is their due. We support "hate crime" legislation as supportive of these goals. The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the right of peaceful dissent but condemns all acts of violence and all groups which resort to terrorist acts for whatever purpose.

Reproductive Rights

The Nebraska Democratic Party recognizes that:

- We live in a pluralistic society.
- Individuals have a constitutional right to privacy.
- The question of abortion is a personal, medical, philosophical, and religious issue.
- Government intrusion into deeply personal decisions runs counter to democratic principles.

Therefore, the Nebraska Democratic Party supports the right of individuals to make reproductive choices in accordance with their personal, philosophical, and religious beliefs. We further support the rights of all individuals to petition the government for changes in the abortion laws in a peaceful, lawful manner.

Equal Access

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that all persons with disabilities are equal, valuable, contributing members of society; and in order to ensure the security, equality, and opportunity of all persons with disabilities, the Party supports equal access to the educational and socio-economic mainstream and the full enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Recognizing the financial hardship to small businesses, churches, and various other non-profit corporations and associations of providing equal access and making necessary building improvements under current federal legislation, the Nebraska Democratic Party encourages the state and federal governments to provide assistance to deserving organizations to enable them to provide equal access in a timely manner.

GLBT Rights

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports full civil rights for GLBT persons, including domestic partnerships and civil unions, which are the same as those accorded to heterosexual couples in civil marriage. This includes employment, housing, and other basic human rights.

Economic Development

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Foundation Statement

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that stability in our society must be rooted in personal economic security, and we recognize the importance of a strong economic engine in providing opportunity for our citizens.

We believe our state has a responsibility to provide a business climate which encourages an ever-growing economic pie, permits an equitable sharing of its fruits, and creates a fair, yet broadly-diversified, tax base which generates the necessary revenue without diminishing our state's attractiveness as a location for business development.

As a party we believe the best incentive for economic development is a balanced combination of a well-educated, well-trained workforce, a carefully crafted package of targeted financial incentives, and the offer of a quality of life for which all Nebraskans are justly proud.

We believe employment opportunities for all persons without regard for gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or age will enhance the economy.

Economic Development Strategies

The Nebraska Democratic Party encourages our elected officials to take appropriate action to further statewide economic development by means of a strategy that includes:

- Quality job creation.
- Job training.
- Entrepreneurship training.
- National and international marketing of Nebraska's goods and services.
- Continuing education.
- Maintenance of a competitive business environment.

Employment Support

The Nebraska Democratic Party encourages state and local officials to explore strategies for coordinating the family and human services they provide so as to make it possible for parents who wish to be employed to seek and secure employment without jeopardizing the level of services available to their families. This may require the continued provision of subsidies for housing, food, childcare, and health insurance during the transition to employment. Our party makes these recommendations because it recognizes the primacy of employment for developing self-worth and gaining economic power.

Development in Depressed Areas

State development programs should be concerned with the revitalization of all depressed economic areas, both urban and rural. The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the creation of an enterprise zone program which targets job creation and economic development not only in areas of urban poverty, but mandates the designation of enterprise zones in rural areas of the state. Further, we support and recognize the importance of the Rural Development Commission and its commitment to dealing with economic development in rural areas of Nebraska and encourage the Legislature and the Governor to increase the state's efforts to create new jobs, affordable housing, and entice new business investment and location in rural areas in Nebraska.

We call for a Rural Community and Entrepreneurship Initiative, with the federal and state support for rural entrepreneurs and micro-businesses, community entrepreneurial development programs, and entrepreneurship education programs – grants for training and technical assistance and favorable loans to rural entrepreneurs.

Transportation

As party we support efforts to ensure adequate federal funding assistance for the construction and maintenance of our state and local road system, a system which is so vital to the health of our state's economy.

The Nebraska Democratic Party calls upon the state and federal government, in cooperation with private industry, to preserve and enhance the existing rail, air, and bus systems. We support and encourage the development of innovative joint public and private agreements to accomplish these goals.

Educational Opportunity

Education is crucial to the economic development of the state. Nebraska should ensure the highest possible quality of primary, secondary, and post-secondary education. Efforts should be made to ensure that all Nebraskans have access to equal educational opportunities.

Recognizing that Nebraska boasts one of the finest systems of public education

in the nation, we believe it is important to emphasize that fact in our efforts to market our state to businesses seeking to locate new facilities. We believe that it is vital to the health of our state that we keep our best and brightest young people as active and productive citizens of Nebraska and that it is important to encourage the creation of jobs so that it will not be necessary for them to leave our state to take full advantage of their skills, training, and talents.

Trade Policy

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that if we want the American economy to continue its strong growth, we must continue to expand trade, and not retreat from the world. We believe that it is only when the people of the world have achieved a standard of living which makes them capable of purchasing our goods and commodities can we truly guarantee good, high-paying jobs for Americans. America's markets are open to the world, so America has the right to demand that the world's markets are open to our products. American products are among the best in the world. When American workers and farmers and American companies have the chance to compete fairly, we do not take second place anywhere in the world.

We believe, therefore, that our government has the duty to uphold American interests in trade by:

- Promoting our exports.
- Expanding trade in agricultural products.
- Opening markets in major product and service centers with our main Competitors.
- Providing safeguards against unfair trade practices.
- Achieving reciprocal market access.

We must continue to work to lower foreign trade barriers; insist that multinational companies play by fair rules at home and abroad; strengthen rules that protect the global economy from fraud and dangerous instability; advance American commercial interests abroad; and ensure that the new global economy is directly beneficial to American working families. As we work to open markets, we must negotiate to guarantee that all trade agreements include standards to protect children, workers, public safety, and the environment. We must ensure adequate trade adjustment assistance and education and training programs to help working families compete and win in the global economy.

The GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) agreements in their current form do not properly or fairly represent primary American industries. These open-door "free trade" policies have left a wake of plant closings, bankruptcies, and devastated communities in every part of the United States and have lost us protection for consumers, transportation, the environment, and agriculture. Therefore, until the below provisions are addressed and enforced, we oppose NAFTA, the GATT and other such trade agreements.

Accordingly, we call for the reworking of these agreements as negotiations proceed for the extension or expansion of their current provisions. Our citizens need agreements that raise, not lower, standards of living and protection. We need agreements that are fair to both producing and consuming nations, including:

- Effective relief from injuries due to imports.
- Safeguards against unfair trade practices.
- Protection against countries with "unwarranted" trade surpluses with the United States.
- Effective provisions protecting labor rights, family farmers, the environment, and human rights.

It is our duty as U.S. citizens and as Democrats to uphold in the forums of the world the highest standards of personal liberty, human dignity, and fair treatment.

Tax Incentives for Businesses

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that tax incentives that are given to businesses to encourage them to locate, expand, or remain in the state should only be offered when there are reasonable grounds to believe that the benefits to the state and its citizens in the form of jobs and new investment will exceed the lost revenue. We encourage legislation to establish a commission to develop accurate cost-benefit models to evaluate the impact of present and future incentive programs. We encourage legislation to require disclosure of tax incentives received in individual companies. We encourage our officials to adopt incentive programs that will encourage businesses to become long-term corporate citizens and to work with other states to eliminate ruinous bidding wars and carpet bagging.

Education

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Foundation Statement

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that one of the most valuable legacies in our national heritage is our system of public education; a system that has been the source of our national strength as an economic power, the key to our envied standard of living, a model for other nations, and the foundation and preserver of our democratic system.

As a party we are committed to the right of every child and adult to receive a basic education that prepares that person to live a fulfilling, fruitful, and productive life. We believe that each individual should have the opportunity to continue beyond this basic education to the fullest extent of his or her ability with full inclusion of all students with disabilities. This commitment is based on our recognition that education must be viewed as a fundamental investment of human resources in the future of our country, our children, and our way of life.

Nebraska Democrats believe that Nebraska needs to take its place with other states that have provided significant resources to assure that all children have qualitative early learning experiences that ensure their success upon school entrance.

We believe that Nebraskans should settle for nothing less than excellence in the education of our children and youth and that the future of our state depends upon our success in this endeavor. We will always stand firmly behind the efforts of our candidates and elected officials in furtherance of this goal.

Public Education

Public schools have served to train our children, to prepare them for the workplace, to introduce them to democratic values, and bring them into daily contact with peers from other economic, ethnic, social, and religious backgrounds. We believe that it is vital to the health of our society and to the future of our nation to preserve our system of public education and devote all of our society's efforts and resources to its improvement. We stand resolutely opposed to any program including No Child Left Behind, which draws social and educational resources (financial and human) away from this task, diluting efforts to improve public information or delaying achievement of this goal. We believe that any program of tuition tax credits or vouchers that would shift resources from public education would only serve to undermine our state's commitment to the public education system and could lead to racial, economic, and social segregation of our children and youth. We stand firmly opposed to any such program.

Education Funding

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that public education should be supported by a broad-based tax system which includes property, sales, and

income taxes. We recommend substantial increases in state and national assistance for educational programs as a means of reducing our reliance upon the property tax for educational needs. Our party supports the goal of balanced funding for education from the local, state, and national levels of government.

Financial Aid for Students

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports state and federal funding for:

- School breakfast and lunch programs to provide balanced nutrition for all elementary and secondary school children.
- Student-centered programs for special need students.
- Affirmative Action programs to guarantee equal access to education for minorities.
- Financial aid programs to help qualified students pursue post-secondary education.

Sex Education

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that public schools should offer a comprehensive family life curriculum and age-appropriate medically accurate sex education program which provides students with the information needed to make informed choices about sexual activity. This includes, but is not limited to, information about abstinence, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, contraception, sexual orientation and sexually responsible behavior. We call upon public policy makers to remove any prohibitive laws and regulation that forbid or discourage in school discussion of sexual orientation. We recommend that public schools provide all adolescent parents with instruction in post-natal care and early childhood development.

Basic Education

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that all students must be exposed to and provided the opportunity to participate in a challenging education program in the least restrictive environment with all supports and/or services. We support a basic educational curriculum that provides students with:

- The ability to read and write.
- Oral communication skills.
- Math and science skills.
- The ability to place their lives in the stream of history of their state, nation, and world.
- An adequate knowledge of foreign cultures and languages.
- A proficiency in geography.
- An understanding of global interdependency and world ecology to prepare them to live as members of a truly global society.
- An understanding of their culture and civilization.
- A futures orientation.

- A knowledge of human physical health needs.
- An appreciation of art and music.
- The appropriate standards of behavior in a civilized society.
- Employment skills for today's (and tomorrow's) job market.

As a party, we believe that educational and academic excellence in Nebraska students can best be assured by a program that sets standards for accomplishment by such students in each area of the curriculum, that monitors the progress of those students by appropriate testing and assessment, and that tailors the curriculum to ensure that those standards are met.

Maximizing Student Achievement

We recognize that enabling some students to be educated to the fullest extent of their abilities will require a commitment beyond just academic education, to providing opportunities to learn those skills that would prepare them for more immediate and direct entry into the work force and productive living. We believe that such training should be recognized as a valuable part of basic education and should be appropriately weighted in any assessment process.

Post-Secondary Education

The Nebraska Democratic Party recognizes the importance of continuing to provide the highest quality liberal arts education and professional and vocational preparation for Nebraskans. We support the following goals of higher education in Nebraska:

- Sufficient funding to enable Nebraska's post-secondary institutions to compete regionally in attracting quality staff and students.
- The promotion of significant research at the college and university Level.
- The provision of proper programs for staff renewal.

Additionally, we support enhanced local, state, and national funding for all public institutions of higher learning, and the recognition through grants and awards for creative teaching and quality research.

Multicultural Education

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that society must educate its citizens to live in a multicultural society free of racism, sexism, cultural bigotry, and discrimination based upon age, religious belief, or disability. We support bilingual and multicultural education programs.

Academic Freedom

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that the academic and professional freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution are essential to American democratic education. We support:

- The right of teachers and students to explore and discuss divergent views.
- The right of teachers to select materials and teaching techniques to implement board-approved curricula.
- The right of families to have their children given alternative assignments for controversial topics.

Preschool Education

The Nebraska Democratic Party recognizes the need to fund preschool education for those students who have special educational needs such that, without pre-Kindergarten education, they will not be able to benefit adequately from their K-12 schooling. We support full funding of Head Start for all students who would benefit from participation in the program. Head Start has proven to be America's most effective pre-school program. Head Start funding and other pre-school programs should be independent of, and not diminish, K-12 public school funding.

Partnerships in Education

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that developing partnerships among public schools, businesses, community members, parents, and educators is a positive strategy for improving public education.

Technology Education

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that technological competence, computer literacy, and access to the Internet will play a vital role in our state's future economic development and therefore must be included as an integral part of the entire K-12 curriculum.

Safety in the Schools

We believe that a safe and secure environment in which students can learn in peace and security is essential to the successful education of the youth of Nebraska. We support the efforts of the state and our local school districts to provide schools that are free from drugs, abuse, harassment, and violence. We believe that a component of this effort should include the presence of an appropriate program of counseling for students.

We also support anti-bullying legislation requiring that all districts adopt specific anti-bullying policies to be posted on school premises and provide training to administrators and teachers to address this problem. Policies would include all protect groups and LGBT students.

Energy

Foundation Statement

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Foundation Statement

We believe that our national and state energy policies must be grounded in a commitment to the creation of an efficient system of energy delivery that will provide adequate supplies of affordable and "clean" energy to business, industry, and consumers at the most economical price with an appropriate distribution of costs and benefits according to need and the ability to pay. We support making incentives for the use of sustainable and renewable energy resources a part of such a policy.

We believe that energy development must be conducted in a manner that is consistent with environmental, health, and safety standards and that cost alone cannot be the sole determine of what source of energy will be used if serious questions of pollution or disease are involved.

We believe that we must pursue energy efficiency as a major goal of national and state policy, using public resources to encourage thrift and discourage waste in the use of our resources.

We believe that, as an agricultural state, we have an economic as well as public policy interest in the encouragement of the use of alternative, sustainable, and renewable energy resources, including bio-mass, hydro-power, and wind energy.

We are committed to public power and are proud of our state's heritage. We believe that the profound future changes in the electric industry, which Nebraska will be facing must be approached with caution to ensure that our power public utilities as well as the consuming public will be protected in the course of deregulation.

Oil

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that the federal government should create a comprehensive market-based oil policy that ensures reasonable and stable oil supplies and prices. Furthermore, oil industry mergers and acquisitions should be monitored and prevented if they are anti-competitive.

Natural Gas and Electric Utility Deregulation

As the State of Nebraska adjusts its current delivery, transport, and regulatory systems for electricity and natural gas to accommodate the deregulation of those utilities as mandated by federal regulatory action, the state must ensure that there is proper regulatory oversight on a state-wide basis and appropriate and delivery and transport mechanisms to protect the interests of consumers in the pricing and delivery of electricity and natural and to guarantee that they receive the lowest utility rates possible and the full benefits of competition.

Electricity

The programs of the Rural Utility Service should be reformed, not abandoned. Federal power systems should remain federally owned and operated. Furthermore, the power produced by these systems should continue to be sold on a preference basis to publicly owned electric systems. We believe that the territorial integrity and independence of rural public power must be maintained.

Nebraska is unique as the only public power state; the only state where one hundred percent of its electricity is provided by publicly-owned electric utilities. The Nebraska Democratic Party supports maintaining the benefits of one hundred percent publicly-owned utilities and encourages the utilization and authorization of independent power producers only when such entities are economically beneficial for all electric customers. We also believe that rate schedules and billings should be simplified and made easier for consumers to interpret and understand.

Alternatives

The federal government should renew its former commitment to the development of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, bio-mass, and low-head hydro-power. The federal government should reaffirm its support for the development of alternative energy resources and technologies and the commercialization of such technologies and resources. Conventional and alternative energy resources should be treated equally by the federal government. The federal government should reduce its subsidies for petroleum and nuclear power while increasing its support for alternative energy resources.

Ethanol and ETBE

As the Nebraska Democratic Party, we support the Environmental Protection Agency mandate of the use of thirty percent ethanol in all non-attainment cities in the United States and call for the eventual phase-in of ten percent ethanol or ETBE use in all gasoline sold in the United States.

Environment

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High-Level Radioactive Waste

Low-Level Radioactive Waste

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Environmental Concerns for Economic Development in Nebraska

Foundation Statement

As Nebraskans, we treasure the heritage of natural resources which was valued and preserved by our forebears. We consider it our responsibility not just to preserve and protect, but to enhance and improve the quality of the environment and our air, water, and soil. These, the most precious gifts of a bountiful Providence, are to be treasured beyond all other resources since they are the foundation of our continued prosperity as an agricultural state and the key to the quality of life we enjoy.

As a party, we pledge ourselves to the task of preserving and protecting the air, soil, and water resources (both surface and ground) as a top priority.

We support efforts to reduce the amount of solid and hazardous waste that is landfilled in our borders and to encourage recycling efforts. We oppose allowing our state to become the ultimate repository for waste generated outside of our borders in the absence of sound policy reasons consistent with the protection of our natural resources for such an arrangement.

We support the preservation of our forests, plains, prairies, lakes, rivers, and streams in their natural state for our own enjoyment and recreation and that of future generations.

Blessed as we are with a rich agricultural bounty, we encourage research into the use of our products for the enhancement of the environment and the generation of clean, sustainable, and renewable energy resources.

We believe that it is a foolish bird which fouls its own nest and we are committed to leaving to our children and to theirs a better, cleaner, richer Nebraska than we ourselves inherited.

Groundwater

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports stronger state and federal groundwater quality and resource management practices, which must be instituted to prevent groundwater contamination and depletion problems.

Soil

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the continuation of "sodbuster" legislation that would prevent marginal lands from being intensively cultivated. Furthermore, the Party calls for strong state and federal support of land conservation programs, including the Conservation Reserve Program, that protects our soil.

Nature

Wetlands and wildlife habitat areas should be maintained as part of our commitment to nature. Wetlands classifications should be based on recent agricultural use, hydrological history, plant life, and soil classification. Regulation of wetlands for agricultural purposes should be the sole responsibility of the Soil Conservation Service. Minor violations should not result in the loss of all ASCS-CCC program benefits.

Stream flow

The Nebraska Democratic Party reaffirms its support for the state water law priority system, which places domestic use first, irrigation for food production uses second, and industrial, recreational, and wildlife uses next. In-stream flow policies must be reasonable to ensure that all interests are served. In times of water shortage, waste by any using group or interest is to be deplored and action taken to prevent. We encourage the state to vigorously defend the right of Nebraska consumers to the use of water flowing within its boundaries to the maximum extent consistent with state and federal law.

Endangered Species

The Nebraska Democratic Party opposes any substantial weakening of the Endangered Species Act, but supports a balancing between human needs and those of the endangered species.

Solid Waste and Recycling

The Nebraska Democratic Party recognizes that solid waste disposal is a national problem affecting Nebraska. Regulations must be implemented to eliminate significant environmental impact from solid, hazardous, and radioactive waste disposal. State funds must be spent for those programs which are the most efficient and effective with the least environmental impact to ensure that the costs borne by consumers are kept as low as possible. Regulations to encourage

the reduction of solid waste through curb-side separation and composting programs should be enacted. Present tax policies which provide hidden subsidies to producers and processors of "virgin" materials must be changed to place recycling on a favorable footing in the marketplace, as well as to provide for conservation of our natural resources for future generations.

High-Level Radioactive Waste

The Nebraska Democratic Party opposes the transportation of high level radioactive waste (spent nuclear fuel or, more specifically, irradiated fuel rods) through the State of Nebraska unless and until the federal government provides adequate funding for the training and equipping of all emergency response personnel from along the entire transportation route through Nebraska. We support the enactment of state legislation providing that the generators and transporters of high level nuclear waste be held liable for all costs associated with the unlikely event of an accident involving the transport of such waste into and through the state.

Low-Level Radioactive Waste

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports amending the Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Compact to provide for guaranteed shared liability among member states. Further, the Nebraska Democratic Party supports a moratorium on issuance of a license for construction or operation of a low-level radioactive waste disposal facility until the Compact is so amended. The State of Nebraska has inadequate liability standards regarding the disposal of low-level radioactive waste. The Nebraska Democratic Party supports enactment of legislation holding the generators and transporters of low-level radioactive waste, and the operators of low-level radioactive waste disposal facilities directly liable for costs associated with damages resulting from a failure of such operations. Nebraska Democrats support a moratorium on the licensing and construction of a new low-level radioactive waste (LLRW) disposal site until there has been completed a comprehensive national study of the need for and economic viability of new LLRW disposal sites, which study shall include alternatives to the construction of new LLRW sites.

Ethanol and ETBE

Ethanol and ETBE-blends produce cleaner air emissions from burning than gasoline when the mass benefits (such as the reduction of carbon monoxide and reduction in ozone depletion) are considered. We support legislative action on the state and federal level that recognizes these benefits and encourages the use of ethanol and ETBE-blends.

Greenhouse Effect and Global Warming

The Nebraska Democratic Party urges that serious efforts be made to identify the sources of, and minimize the production of, so-called "greenhouse" gases.

We call upon our leaders, at all levels of government, to develop energy, and climate change policies, provide educational and technical resources for government and individual responses. It is essential to financially invest in resources that would address the risks and challenges we face as a result of global warming/climate change.

Reforestation

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports a return to Nebraska's pioneering efforts at tree planting and urges the use of appropriate trees that are suitable for erosion control and energy conservation along waterways, roads, and in urban developments. We heartily endorse public, private, and cooperative efforts to replace trees lost or damaged by inclement weather and to add to our total stock of trees. A sustainable forestry industry is practicable and attainable throughout our nation by encouraging the domestic processing of raw logs.

Environmental Concerns for Economic Development in Nebraska

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports public participation in the evaluation and consideration of the potential environmental impact that could result from proposed economic development projects. Therefore, public forums concerning the environmental record and possible impact of an industry should be scheduled and held by the county boards of areas considering hosting any industry whose potential effect is challenged by any resident of such area.

Foreign Policy

Foundation Statement

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that our nation's foreign policy must be framed to protect and further our own real, vital national interests, both military and economic, and must be characterized by a commitment to the rule of law on the international level to ensure that basic human rights are protected in every nation and that peace and justice become the accepted norm for the globe in the next millennium.

We believe that it is important for our nation, as the sole remaining superpower in the world, to use its military power judiciously to preserve the peace and protect the basic human rights we value so highly wherever we are called upon to provide assistance. We believe that we have a responsibility to exercise our influence for good when consistent with our own national interest and our treaty obligations. We believe further that preemptive use of force that is not in accord with accepted norms of international law is inappropriate.

While we believe in a strong America, capable of defending itself and preserving

the peace, we oppose the unnecessary build-up of military force beyond what is necessary for that purpose. Such excess expenditures serve only to distort the economy and move our resources away from where they are most desperately needed to improve our cities and infrastructure and meet other pressing domestic needs.

We support the role of the United Nations and other international organizations in developing and making international law. The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that the United States, along with other member nations, should abide by the laws as promulgated.

We believe our foreign relations policy must be centered upon a commitment to basic human rights. Our support of human rights must be applied consistently toward all nations, regardless of their economic or political philosophy. We condemn the use of murder or torture as a matter of policy by any government in any country for any purpose. We oppose the giving of military assistance to any government which practices, promotes, or tolerates the violations of the civil liberties of its own citizens.

Many nations face today the major problems of hunger, disease, poverty, and illiteracy. The United States can best assist these nations through a long-term commitment of economic and humanitarian aid. In the provision of such aid, the United States should seek to develop programs which are "sustainable" and which will assist developing nations to become, over time, self-sufficient. We encourage these nations to institute land reform programs which place land ownership with small farmers. We support restrictions on multinational corporations which exploit developing countries through the wasteful use of natural resources and the payment of low wages to indigenous workers. American aid to developing nations should be based upon need and social justice.

We oppose the current move toward unilateralism. We believe that the United States has a responsibility to further the interests of peace and justice throughout the world where we are called upon for assistance. We do not fear the use of our military force when exercised in the right cause with appropriate planning and sufficient resources to get the job done.

Government

Foundation Statement

Elections

Presidential Elections

Campaign Finance Reform

Voter Registration

Taxation

Government Consolidation

Tax Reform
Fiscal Responsibility
Fiscal Reform
Elimination of Mandates

General Issues

Social Security
Disabled Veterans Payments
Deregulation
Native American Affairs
Crime Victims
Crime
Prisons
Gambling
Gun Control
Separation of Church and State
Open Meetings/Public Documents

Legislative Salaries

Foundation Statement

As Democrats, we believe that a properly constituted system of government, established by law by the free choice of its constituents and administered by duly-elected representatives is necessary for the maintenance of a civilized and humane society.

We do not fear "big government," believing that size alone is not the determiner of whether government is good or bad. We demand of government only that it reflect the will of its citizens and furnish them with the services they have called upon it to provide.

We believe that a good government is open, responsive, and accountable to the will of the citizens. All citizens must have the right to know what their government is doing and the right to be heard on the issues by all public bodies.

We believe that good government is maintained by an electoral system that is efficient, responsive, and characterized by integrity. We believe that no person, group, or organization should be permitted to use wealth or power in the electoral process to distort the result or exercise undue influence. We oppose the creation or maintenance of any barrier to the free exercise of the franchise by any qualified individual. We believe that all citizens, regardless of their station in life, their occupation, their economic status, or their location must have an equal voice in the election of public representatives.

We believe that all citizens have a duty to share in paying the cost of the government they have created. Whether we receive little or much in the way of public services, as members of society we have an obligation to provide our share of the cost of furnishing the services that our elected representatives have determined must be provided. It is vital that our government be supported by a system of taxation on all levels which is equitable and provides for the legitimate

needs of our State and its localities. We believe that it is important for the State to remove inequities in the ability of local governments to meet their obligations through the use of state aid.

We believe that every citizen has the right to expect that the government will spend no more than is absolutely necessary to furnish the services that it is required to provide.

Among the highest duties of any general government is the protection of its citizens. We believe strongly in the need for government at all levels to provide professional law enforcement and support the efforts of our elected officials to enhance the safety of our communities in any manner consistent with the protection of our civil rights and liberties.

While we recognize that government cannot solve all of our problems, we believe that no individual will ever be able to live in freedom or reach his or her full potential as an individual unless our society is one which is governed properly and according to these principles.

Elections

Presidential Primaries

The Nebraska Democratic Party encourages the leaders of both political parties and all elected officials to call for the implementation of reforms designed to limit the length and cost of presidential campaigns. We encourage uniform presidential primary procedures in every state. The Nebraska Democratic Party endorses the closed primary system used in Nebraska.

Campaign Finance Reform

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the Campaign Finance Limitation Act that establishes reasonable limits on campaign spending and contributions, consistent with the Constitution of Nebraska. We call for prompt extension of its provisions to include campaigns for Governor. We also endorse legislation which would provide a state income tax check-off for political parties and political campaigns in Nebraska.

Voter Registration

The Nebraska Democratic Party urges county election commissioners and county clerks who serve as election officers to:

- Intensify their efforts to encourage and facilitate voter registration.
- Provide for voter registration in high schools.
- Update voter registration lists.
- Actively assist local political parties and candidates in their efforts to

increase voter participation.

We support election day on-site voter registration. We pledge the assistance of the Nebraska Democratic Party to facilitate voter registration and participation.

Ballot Verification

The very heart of our democracy is based on the premise that legitimate authority and power of the government is based on the consent of the governed. In order for citizens to see their government as legitimate, they must have confidence in the process that puts officials in power. Nothing is more important than widespread citizen confidence in the final outcome of elections. Regardless of what technology is used in the election process, we affirm that it is critical that the system be one that creates a voter verified audit trail that can be used for recounts. To qualify as a voter verified system, the voting process must create a permanent record that can be easily verified by each individual voter as correct (or spoiled by the voter if not correct) and be available later should a recount of the election become necessary. We also oppose any election system that is proprietary and not controlled and verifiable by the citizens for the public good.

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the enactment of a state statute requiring each county to conduct a post-election random selection of precincts representing five percent of the county votes or at least one precinct in each county for a bipartisan board manual recount of ballots.

Taxation

Government Consolidation

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports joint programs and activities between political subdivisions and permissive legislation for the consolidation of political units where such consolidations and programs are fiscally sound and appropriate for the effective delivery of services.

Tax Reform

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports an equitable tax system for all citizens which includes an appropriate use of different forms of taxation in a proper mix to ensure that the ability to pay a tax is balanced against the benefits and services received and the needs of society as a whole to a stable revenue stream to finance its obligations and service responsibilities. Tax reform must be handled in a way that provides true relief from excessive property taxes while allowing local governmental subdivisions to retain control of their own budgetary processes. We oppose arbitrary budget limits and revenue and spending lids on political subdivisions and the state. We support equity and property tax relief in the financing of primary and secondary education as well as other local governmental services.

Fiscal Responsibility

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports a balanced federal budget and encourages Congress to keep it balanced, recognizing as we do that a large federal debt creates serious social and economic problems. We call upon leaders at the Federal and State levels to return to sound principles of fiscal responsibility.

Fiscal Reform

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports reforms that help eliminate wasteful programs and unnecessary spending at all levels of government. We urge all elected officials to ensure that the taxpayer receives the most economical, efficient and effective government possible without resorting to the elimination of necessary programs and services. We support a budgetary system which permits government to provide those services required to assist all Nebraska citizens to live a life of dignity and worth. We welcome the opportunity to truly make the federal government efficient and cost effective under an administration responsive to public needs.

Elimination of Mandates

The Nebraska Democratic Party heartily supports and endorses efforts to convince Congress to stop issuing to the states and localities expensive mandates which are unrelated to their core purposes and duties. We believe that if Congress supports an initiative for the states, it should provide sufficient funding to enable the states to carry out the initiative without distorting state and local priorities and adding additional pressure on state and local budgets and tax levies.

General Issues

Social Security

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the Social Security and Medicare Systems. We call upon all Democrats to be diligent in protecting the integrity and solvency of the system and to work to develop appropriate changes to ensure that future generations can rely upon receiving suitable benefits as they retire.

Disabled Veterans Payments

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that disabled veterans who have proudly served their country should be able to earn larger salaries and have incomes above the present limits while still retaining their disability payments. In addition, we call upon Congress to allocate more of the funds saved from military budget cuts to services for disabled veterans.

Deregulation

The Nebraska Democratic Party calls upon the federal government to research the effects deregulation has had upon the savings and loan, banking, communications, energy, and transportation industries and to use the research to make recommendations for the future regulatory role of government. We believe that there is an appropriate and vitally important role for government in the regulation of business activities for the purpose of protecting the public health, safety, and welfare. When such regulation is limited to the minimum amount of intrusion necessary for those purposes as determined by elected officials it operates for the benefit of everyone. We believe that regulation should not be overly burdensome or intrusive and we support the removal of regulatory restrictions that impede efficiency and economy in the marketplace and needlessly raise prices for consumers.

Native American Affairs

Upholding the tribal sovereignty accorded by the treaties between the Indian nations and the U.S. Government is a critical component in improved relations with Native Americans. The Nebraska Democratic Party recognizes tribal nations as distinct cultural, political, economic, and social entities, and will work to protect and, where necessary, to restore their rightful sovereign status. The federal government must fulfill its treaty promises to provide good health care, education, and workable economic assistance strategies to Native Americans. We further call upon the federal government to protect Native Americans' freedom of worship, their sacred rites, and their memorials.

Crime Victims

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports legislation that provides needed support and assistance to crime victims and the witnesses of crimes: to advise them of their rights under the law and the services available to them, to aid them through the course of the criminal process, and to help them in the process of a return to a sense of personal stability. We urge the legislature to provide adequate funding of the victims' restitution fund.

Crime

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that crime is a critical problem demanding top priority attention by all levels of government. We believe that it is the duty and responsibility of government to provide all of our citizens with the basic sense that they can live and work free from the fear of crime and personal violence. We believe that our criminal justice system should inculcate a respect for the law by making sure that the penalties for breaking the law are predictable and sure so that everyone knows the serious consequences that flow from criminal acts. We support efforts by the state and federal government to provide additional financial assistance to local governments to enable them to train and hire more police officers and to place them on the street. We support

expanded drug counseling and treatment to help remove drugs as one of the principal causes of criminal activity. We believe it is the responsibility of our state government to build the necessary correctional facilities and to provide sufficient secure space to house violent and dangerous criminals for the full term of their imprisonment in conditions which comport with legal and constitutional requirements. We believe in the importance of education as a means of instilling a sense of social duty and responsibility to our citizens and as a means of providing a way out of the cycle of poverty and hopelessness that breeds crime. We believe in the importance of removing poverty and joblessness as a source of crime. Many ex-felons are disenfranchised from the political process. We support the reintegration of ex-felons to the political process to include the right to vote.

Death Penalty

We support life imprisonment without the possibility of parole as an alternative to capital punishment.

Prisons

We believe that the purpose of Nebraska's correctional facilities is to rehabilitate as well as to punish. To this end we support institutional programs that make demonstrated progress in academic or vocational education, drug and psychological counseling, or community service as a mandatory condition of parole or early release. We support public and private initiatives whose goal is to reorient inmates so that they can integrate themselves as contributing members of Nebraska communities. We support the efforts of Nebraska churches, associations, and similar groups to develop programs that utilize inmates in activities that benefit communities. We favor efforts to keep non-violent offenders out of correctional facilities where violent offenders are housed and call for the expanded use of home arrest and other sentencing alternatives.

Gambling

We encourage the Legislature to allow the people to have the right to vote on the issue of whether to expand legalized gambling. Furthermore, we urge the Governor or the Legislature to create a commission for the purpose of studying the impact of gambling on Nebraska and all Nebraskans.

Gun Control

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports responsible gun ownership within the limitations and protections already provided by Congress and the Constitution. We oppose the adoption of a "concealed carry" law in Nebraska and support continuation of the current federal ban on assault weapons.

Separation of Church and State

The Nebraska Democratic Party holds that it is vital for the health of our society

that the separation of church and state be strictly maintained, while recognizing that religion plays a key and vital role in the lives of our citizens and in the formation of their beliefs and conduct. We support the constitutionally guaranteed separation of church and state and oppose any constitutional amendment which would allow organized prayer or organized religious instruction in the public schools, except for the purpose of the teaching of comparative religion.

Open meetings/Public Documents

We support Nebraska's current laws on open meetings and citizen access to public records, and urge strict and consistent enforcement of these laws.

Homeland Security

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that homeland security is of utmost importance to national security. Therefore, we call upon all levels of government to fully staff and fully fund the first responders, public safety officers, public works personnel and support staff of these entities.

Legislative Salaries

While supportive of Nebraska's tradition of citizen legislators, the Nebraska Democratic Party believes state senators should not be expected to subject themselves and their families to economic hardship while admirably answering the call to public service. Salaries should reflect the reality of senators' year-long representation, while being sufficient to open the Unicameral's doors to Nebraskans from every walk of life without requiring independent wealth.

Health Care

Foundation Statement

Health Care Choice

Portability

AIDS/HIV Education, Services, and Testing

Drugs, Tobacco, and Alcohol Abuse

Insurance Coverage for Mental Illness

Family Planning

Foundation Statement

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that affordable, accessible, quality health care is a basic human right. We support the enactment of health care legislation that allows all people to enjoy the benefits of quality, affordable health care, including prescription drugs, while maintaining a diversity of health care philosophies, approaches and delivery systems. We encourage the

development and adoption of programs that focus on citizens with special needs. We support a strong, statewide community system of public health, federal/state-funded immunizations for children, and comprehensive research and educational programs to address disease prevention. We strongly support increased aid for drug, alcohol, and tobacco abuse research, education, prevention, and rehabilitation.

Comprehensive Health Care for Children

We believe that all children are entitled to comprehensive physical and mental health services.

Health Care Choice

We support the basic right of Nebraskans to choose the type of health care they want. We further support passage by the US Congress of a meaningful and binding Patients Bill of Rights. The Nebraska Democratic Party fully supports the enactment of "any willing provider" legislation in the state of Nebraska.

Portability

We believe that legislation needs to be adopted to ensure that working men and women have transferable health insurance coverage that follows the individual and his or her family from one job to another. Additionally, legislation should be adopted providing that health insurance for pre-existing medical conditions can only be excluded for up to a six-month maximum time period on health insurance policies.

AIDS/HIV and Other Blood Borne Pathogens Education, Services, and Testing

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports comprehensive and continuing educational programs to address AIDS/HIV and other blood borne pathogens prevention and risk reduction. It also encourages medical support and research and the provision of support social services to people with AIDS/HIV and other blood borne pathogens. The Nebraska Democratic Party opposes mandatory or involuntary HIV antibody testing. Except in circumstances involving the possible exposure by law enforcement officials, fire and emergency medical services personnel, or health care providers to blood or blood products, or upon the request of a physician treating a patient who has been or is being victimized by an individual accused of committing a criminal act, HIV antibody testing should be voluntary and anonymous.

Drugs, Tobacco, and Alcohol Abuse

The Nebraska Democratic Party encourages the state and federal governments to provide increased aid for substance abuse education, prevention, and the rehabilitation of substance abusers.

Insurance Coverage for Mental Illness

The Nebraska Democratic Party calls upon the health insurance industry to provide mental health coverage on a parity with other health care maintenance, diagnosis and treatment.

Family Planning

We support the continuation of Title X funding for family planning. We urge the federal government and the state legislature to promote legislation that would help women with problem pregnancies. The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the right of patients who rely on federally funded services to receive comprehensive medical information in order to make informed decisions regarding their medical treatment. We support a physician's right and obligation to treat patients according to accepted medical and ethical standards in both publicly and privately funded services and facilities. We urge contraceptive medications and devices to be covered under the same regulations as other prescription medications and devices.

Human Services

Foundation Statement

Welfare Reform

Child Care

Sexual and Domestic Violence

Veterans

Sexual Responsibility

Stem Cell Research

Foundation Statement

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that all Nebraskans are entitled to safe, decent, affordable housing; adequate nutrition; protection from violence, neglect, and abuse; and job training and quality, affordable child care, and that our federal, state, and local governments have a responsibility to ensure that those needs are met.

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that welfare was meant to be a helping hand up and out of poverty. No person who is able to work should stay on welfare forever and no person who works should live in poverty. We believe that it is necessary to provide education, job training, and child and health care to people making the transition from welfare to work.

Welfare Reform

As Nebraska Democrats, we believe that welfare should be a helping hand up and out of poverty. We believe that the cycle of welfare dependency can be broken by adhering to two simple principles:

- That no person who is able to work should stay on welfare forever.
- That no person who works should live in poverty.

We believe that our nation needs to offer people a new social contract by investing in education and job training for them and by providing them with the child care and health care they need to go to work and achieve a long term self-sufficiency.

As a cornerstone of welfare reform we believe that the government must assume the responsibility to see that there are meaningful jobs for welfare recipients to move into. We believe that welfare reform must involve a commitment to maintaining families. We believe that the work done by two-parent families in raising their children is of great value to society and should be recognized as such in the formulation of public policy. We support a crackdown on inactive parents, the creation of an effective system of child support enforcement, and systematic efforts to establish paternity for every child.

We believe that this program will restore the covenant that welfare was meant to be: a promise of temporary help for people who have fallen on hard times.

Child Care

Nebraska Democrats recognize the need for accessible quality childcare. We encourage the public and private development of childcare services for our children at affordable prices. We also encourage the payment of wages to childcare workers at a rate and in an amount that recognizes the value of their services as caregivers to our children.

Sexual and Domestic Violence

The Nebraska Democratic Party abhors violence for any reason and supports increased spending for victim protection and counseling, offender rehabilitation, and expanded education in our schools to decrease the incidence of sexual assault and domestic violence. We believe the justice system must address itself more vigorously to the seriousness of domestic violence, insuring that those charged receive prompt assistance or punishment as circumstances warrant and that victims are protected.

Veterans

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that we have a special obligation to our nation's veterans to provide them the assistance they may need to live

independent and productive lives. The focus needs to be directed to our Soldiers' and Sailors' Homes and Veterans Administration Hospitals and to geographically accessible health care for veterans regardless of where they may reside.

Sexual Responsibility

The Nebraska Democratic Party encourages public institutions and voluntary associations to conduct outreach programs addressed to teenagers that provide access to contraception, information about sexually transmitted diseases and family planning options.

Stem Cell Research

Nebraska Democrats urge the President, Senate and House to join the majority of the American people in supporting a bi-partisan movement to expand federal funding for ALL lifesaving stem cell research. We join scientists who overwhelmingly agree that stem cell research is pivotal in discovering cures for devastating medical conditions. Stem cell therapy offers hope to more than 100 million Americans who have serious illnesses- from Alzheimer's to heart disease to juvenile diabetes to Parkinson's. We support stem cell research governed by the strictest ethical guidelines. Nebraska Democrats will not walk away from the chance to save lives and reduce human suffering.

Labor

Foundation Statement

Youth Employment

Double-Breasting

Corporate Takeovers and Mergers

Public Employee Unions (Federal, State, and Postal)

Unemployment Compensation Benefits

Workers Compensation Benefits

Occupational Safety and Health

Labor Legislation

Railroad Retirement System

Part-Time and Seasonal Workers

Minimum Wage

Workers Memorial Day

Undocumented Workers

Strike Breaker Replacement Workers

"Fair Share" Legislation

Commission on Industrial Relations

Foundation Statement

The strength of the American economy lies with the people of the American labor force. Their productive potential, widely distributed purchasing power, and aspiration for better lives for themselves and their children contribute greatly to our nation's economic growth and stability.

As Democrats, we believe that employment is not just a matter of earning a living, but also of individual self-esteem, general economic stability, and prosperity. We believe that federal and state governments must place a high priority on putting all job-less Americans to work. Funding and support for job training programs must be provided.

We believe the minimum wage must be a "living" wage.

We stand firmly for the principle of equal pay for work of comparable value. We pledge ourselves to support all efforts to achieve pay equity in the workplace and are opposed to job segregation on the same basis.

We believe that it is important to support our workers by purchasing products and services from companies that provide jobs for them and encourage the purchase of products made in Nebraska or elsewhere in the United States.

Youth Employment

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that providing employment for all young people, particularly minority teenagers, must be addressed because of its great importance not only to Nebraska but throughout the nation.

Double-Breasting

In direct defiance of congressional intent (expressed in Section 8(f) of the National Labor Relations Act), some employers engage in the practice known as "double-breasting". This practice operates in two ways. A typical example is company 'A' which has a collective bargaining agreement with a union, but which then sets up a related company 'B' which it operates on a non-union basis. In some cases, most of the work formerly done by company 'A' is now done by company 'B'. In other situations, company 'A' may go out of business entirely. This results in a situation where there is no cessation or lessening of the employer's activity in the industry but there is a termination of employee rights to participate in the activity under the terms of a collective bargaining agreement.

Therefore, the Nebraska Democratic Party supports action to end the practice of double-breasted contractors ignoring their contractual obligations.

Corporate Takeovers and Mergers

The Nebraska Democratic Party opposes corporate mergers and take-overs that improve short term profits and stock prices by stripping workers of their jobs or reducing their wages and benefits. We believe that rash corporate actions to improve the bottom-line do not benefit American workers or the communities in which they live. We urge employers to recognize their responsibilities to their employees and their communities before closing factories. We urge them to provide economic protection to their workers and families and to emphasize reindustrialization. We support legislation that would provide protection to workers, their communities, and society at large from the most blatant of these abuses. We encourage corporate restructuring and other business activity that leads to long-term investments in human resources and research and development.

Public Employee Unions

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the right of public employees to form and join a labor organization for the purpose of collective bargaining and the resolution of grievances.

Unemployment Compensation Benefits

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that because Nebraska provides among the lowest unemployment compensation benefits in the nation, the maximum weekly benefit amount of unemployment benefits should be increased to two-thirds of the state's average weekly wage as recommended by the National Commission on Unemployment Compensation. We also support the efforts of the Trade Adjustment Assistance Program to provide jobless benefits, retraining, and relocation assistance to workers who suffer from national foreign trade policies that increase imports and cost Americans their jobs.

Workers Compensation Benefits

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that the maximum weekly benefit amount paid to a worker injured on the job should be one hundred percent of the state's average weekly wage and we urge the Legislature to preserve that standard and take no action to reduce it or dilute any current benefits.

Occupational Safety and Health

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports strict enforcement of all state and federal standards in the public and private sectors to ensure safety in the workplace. We also support the creation of labor/management safety and health committees to provide for the safety of workers and the passage of legislation regarding hazardous materials in the workplace.

Labor Legislation

The Nebraska Democratic Party goes on record opposing any further attempts to weaken the Davis-Bacon Act. Further, we go on record in full support of the Hobbs Act in its current form and oppose any congressional action that would provide federal prosecutors with a broad mandate to intervene in labor disputes and hold the threat of felony indictments over the heads of strikers without similarly placing employers and their agents in jeopardy.

Railroad Retirement System

The Nebraska Democratic Party opposes any proposal to abolish the Railroad Retirement Board and supports the Railroad Retirement System in its present form.

Part-Time and Seasonal Workers

We believe that part-time workers (often women, the young, the old, and minorities) should be justly compensated for work at fair value without regard to the number of hours worked. We also believe that permanent part-time and seasonal workers should have access to the same fringe benefits, particularly health insurance coverage, as are available to the full-time workers employed at the same place of employment. If any employer has enough work for any permanent part-time employees, the Nebraska Democratic Party encourages these workers be converted to regular full-time permanent employee status, and be given all wages and benefits that would be prevalent.

Minimum Wage/Living Wage

We endorse current efforts to raise the minimum wage. We believe that the minimum wage should be a "living" wage. At the very least, this should be a wage based on the standard that any person working forty hours a week will receive in gross pay a wage which will yield an income greater than the national poverty level, adjusted for the local Consumer Price Index, for a family of four. This "living" wage shall be indexed according to Federal guidelines for a worker's family status. We also believe that taxpayer dollars should not be used to subsidize sub-poverty wages or to promote irresponsible economic development. Therefore, we support living wage ordinances and legislation so that those working full-time should not be forced to rely on public assistance.

Workers Memorial Day

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the statute designating April 28 as a Memorial Day to recognize those workers who have been injured and who have died on the job during the previous year. We support this day of remembrance and observance to underscore the need for the enactment and enforcement of state and federal legislation to prevent injuries, illnesses, and deaths at the

worksite.

Undocumented Workers

We support the strict enforcement of current laws prohibiting the hiring of foreign nationals illegally in this country and the imposition of sanctions for employers who recruit, hire, and exploit such workers.

Strike Breaker Replacement Workers

The Nebraska Democratic Party supports legislation that would ban the replacement of workers who go out on strike. The right to withhold labor as a last resort is a crucial part of a fair, just, and balanced collective- bargaining process. In order for good-faith negotiations to occur in collective bargaining, there needs to be a level playing field. If corporations can hire replacement workers when there is a strike, there is no need to engage in good- faith bargaining.

"Fair Share" Legislation

The State of Nebraska, a "right to work" state, permits non-union workers to enjoy the wages, fringe benefits, and working conditions negotiated by unions through their collective bargaining efforts without requiring them to join the unions. The Nebraska Democratic Party supports the enactment of "Fair Share" legislation which would require all persons working under collective bargaining agreements and benefiting from their provisions to pay their fair share of the costs incurred in the negotiation and administration of these agreements. Furthermore, we encourage all candidates seeking State offices to support such "Fair Share" legislation.

Commission on Industrial Relations

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that the present structure of the Nebraska Commission on Industrial Relations works fairly for both employers and employees and opposes any changes in the statutory provisions governing the Commission.

Technology

Foundation Statement

Universal Broadband

Foundation Statement

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that all citizens should have access to affordable telecommunications services and the latest technologies - no matter

where they live.

We promote three basic principles for the Nebraska legislature and Congress to follow as they make modifications to the laws that govern communications:

1. Fairness - Urban, suburban and rural consumers alike deserve to stay connected to their families, friends and the world through communications technologies.
2. Affordability - Technology is only useful when it's affordable to consumers. Lawmakers must ensure that all Americans can receive communications technologies at affordable prices.
3. Access - Every American should have access to the latest, modern technologies, no matter where they live.

Universal Broadband

Building from Nebraska's successful tradition of public power and recognizing the economic and educational needs of the 21st Century, the Nebraska Democratic Party calls for the development of a statewide broadband Internet infrastructure. Municipalities and other public entities should have the right to partner with private corporations to encourage access and lower costs, while retaining the flexibility to pursue their own service as best fulfills the needs of the citizens they serve.

Support of National Defense

Foundation Statement

Veterans Administration

Length of Deployment

Pay Status

Death Benefits

Disabled Veterans

Lost Equipment

Retirement

Universal Health Care for All Veterans

GI Bill Education Benefits

Rescinding "Don't Ask"

Fiscal Accountability

Equip Troops

Foundation Statement

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that all members (past, present and future) have earned this country's highest respect, and in earning that respect they have earned the right to be fairly treated by this Country.

Veterans Administration

The Nebraska Democratic Party calls for the federal government to fully and adequately fund the Veterans Administration, to ensure that all Veterans have access to the services of the Veterans Administration that they have earned.

The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that by not fully funding the Veterans Administration, the United States Government is not fulfilling its obligation to the men and women who have proudly, and will proudly serve our country in uniform.

Length of Deployment

National Guard and Reserve troops should never be deployed for more than 2 tours of active duty in a war zone, because 1) their primary mission is to provide support and assistance for domestic emergencies, and 2) because these men and women are known as citizen soldiers; they have full-time jobs, own businesses or even teach our children. They have sacrificed more than the Active service members by leaving their jobs, and businesses to service their Country often returning to lower paying jobs, loss of business profits or total loss of their businesses. It is time the government and the American people step up to the plate and fight for the ones who are suppose to be protecting us on the home front.

Pay Status

Delay of pay to families in the National Guard and Reserve has placed their families in more difficult situations than they experience during non-deployment. These families have lost much, not only than their husbands and wives, but they lost another wage earner to pay bills. When those checks ever how small, however badly needed, are delayed it places that family in a tough position. We must back a better system to allow our men and women in uniform to be timely pay system when activated of National Guard and Reserve troops.

Death Benefits

Widows and widowers of our fallen soldiers will receive death benefits in a timely manner.

Disabled Veterans

Our disabled veterans must also be provided for as well, with timely assessment and provision of benefits. The Nebraska Democratic Party believes that disabled veterans who have proudly served their country should be able to earn larger salaries and have incomes above the present limits while still retaining their disability payments. In addition, we call upon Congress to allocate more funds saved from military budget cuts to the Veterans Administration.

Requiring Compensation for Lost Equipment

Our troops have been charged for field loss on equipment to be replaced such as gas masks, flak jackets, night vision goggles and other equipment. This equipment cost will not be charged back to the service men and women.

Retirement

Retirement benefits not given until age 60-65 years of age after 20 years of service should be changed to eligibility for benefits at the time of retirement.

Universal Health Care for All Veterans

All veterans including the National Guard and the Reserves deserve the right to health care, from the Veterans Administration.

GI Bill Education Benefits

Allow the use of GI Bill benefits for the National Guard to be used after their service is completed so that these men and women can obtain an education even after their service.

Rescind “Don’t Ask”

Rescind the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.

Fiscal Accountability

The Pentagon on all military contracts must be examined to determine how the money is being spent to fund war and peacetime missions.

Equip our Troops

The American people and its government should never send troops into harm’s way without proper equipment, enough troops, and enough funding to accomplish the mission.