



West Virginia State Democratic 2012 Party Platform

Preamble

President Harry S. Truman once said, "America was not built on fear. America was built on courage, on imagination and an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand." In tough times, Democrats are getting the job done. Despite inheriting the deepest recession in nearly a century, President Obama is leading the way to an economic recovery that benefits all Americans. The United States has experienced more than two straight years of private sector job growth, and unemployment is at its lowest point in three years.

At the same time, Democrats expanded health care to millions of Americans, passed Wall Street reform, saved the U.S. auto industry from extinction, adopted legislation to ensure women receive equal pay for equal work, increased our investment in higher education and job training, and ended institutional discrimination in the military.

The war in Iraq was brought to a responsible end, and a timeline has been set for bringing our troops home from Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden, who was responsible for America's darkest day, has been captured and killed. We have reduced our dependence on foreign oil for three years in a row. In a word, we are safer and more secure today than four years ago.

In West Virginia, Governor Tomblin is presiding over an economy that is experiencing the second highest rate of job growth of any state in the nation. Democrats have cut taxes for hard working West Virginia families, balanced our state budget year after year, and paid down debts.

Meanwhile, the Republicans' top priority is maintaining tax cuts for the wealthiest 1% of Americans at the expense of Medicare, Social Security, education and our nation's infrastructure. Rather than trying to convince us that their failed policies are right for America, the GOP is systematically disenfranchising voters by adopting restrictive voting laws and threatening the very fabric of our democracy.

In 2012, we have a clear choice to continue to fight for progress and opportunity, or we can turn the clock back to the failed Republican policies that left millions of American families on the brink of economic collapse. Each section of the 2012 platform represents the values of our Party and the aspirations we have for our state and our nation. Together, we will help create an America and a West Virginia that is built to last.

2012 Democratic Party Platform Committee

By State Senatorial District

1 st	Brenda L. Miller	10 th	Doris Morefield
2 nd	Scott Lemley	11 th	Andrea Hays
3 rd	Jerry Brookover	12 th	Bob Stultz
4 th	Joyce Creel	13 th	Kelly Palmer
5 th	Nancy Eplin	14 th	Charles Messick
6 th	Rodney Thompson	15 th	Cindy Largent
7 th	Sue Ann Zickefoose	16 th	Rod Snyder - Chair
8 th	Dave Hardy	17 th	Elaine Harris - Secretary
9 th	Chris Hall		

Education

We believe in the Constitution of West Virginia and support a thorough and efficient educational system. Education is a cornerstone of the future and a means of escaping poverty. A quality education starts with a qualified, certified teacher in every classroom.

A-1: Pre-K-12

We support:

- a) Ensuring that every child has the skills necessary for postsecondary education and/or the world of work.
- b) Providing each child with the right to attend school in a safe, disciplined environment conducive to learning.
- c) Ensuring that every child comes to the classroom prepared and able to learn.
- d) Steps to recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Every classroom should have a highly qualified and certified teacher.
- e) The belief that educators, parents, and the community should take ownership of their schools.
- f) Quality science, technology, English, arts, and math curriculum in every school (STEAM approach).
- g) Low-cost, nutritional lunches for our students.
- h) Implement programs to alleviate truancy and bullying.
- i) Expanding the innovative use of technology.
- j) The value of a teacher in the classroom, but distance learning alternatives to ensure a challenging curriculum.
- k) The evaluation of schools by multiple measures, not just standardized test scores.
- l) Preschool programs to ensure that all children enter school with the same opportunities.
- m) After school programs to provide academic support and enrichment activities.
- n) Ensuring that state funding is used for public education, from pre-K to post secondary education.
- o) Smaller class sizes.

A-2: Post Secondary Education

We support:

- a) A focus by colleges on preparing students for a global economy.
- b) The right of every eligible West Virginian to obtain quality, accessible post secondary training.
- c) Funding for the Promise Scholarship and encouraging recipients to give back to the state, either monetarily or through service.
- d) The Smart 529 program and other initiatives to make college affordable and accessible.

We recognize:

- e) The necessity of a strong community college system responsive to local business and industry needs.
- f) The need to support adult basic education as an alternative path to becoming an educated productive citizen.

A-3: Libraries

We support:

- a) Funding for libraries because of their importance as a source of lifelong learning.
- b) The availability of accessible technology for all citizens.
- c) Volunteer literacy programs.

B – Economy

West Virginia's best natural resource is its people. West Virginia must grow its economy by creating and sustaining jobs that provide living wages with benefits. West Virginia's economic strength lies in its adaptable workforce and good work ethic. We strive to give our state's employers and employees the opportunity to live, work, and raise their families in a progressive economy.

B-1: Keys to Building a Stronger Economy

We believe that:

a) Infrastructure

1. A strong economy relies on good roads, bridges, water and sewer, airports, waterways, internet access, and phone service.
2. Federal, state, and local governments must invest in a quality infrastructure that enables us to build an economy that works for all.
3. Taxpayer dollars must be used in an accountable way to fund vital projects.

b) Workforce Development

We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to acquire a good education and new skills, and to put those skills to work.

c) Small Business

We believe that:

1. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and we should encourage the entrepreneurial spirit.
2. The gap should be bridged between government and small business through better communication about the many programs and services that are available.

d) Business Climate

We believe that:

1. It is essential to promote a positive image of the state.
2. The state can help attract new business and aid existing employers while expecting them to be responsible corporate citizens.
3. Ensure that tax incentives are done in a responsible manner that maintains a sustainable tax base for our public schools.

e) Agriculture and Forestry

We support:

1. Family farms.
2. Ensuring that West Virginia farmers have a strong safety net and that they can achieve profitability in the marketplace.
3. Incentives for farmers and foresters to use good conservation practices and sustainable farming methods.

f) Tourism

We support the promotion and development of tourism in our state to further diversify our economy. Major developments, like the Boy Scouts national campground should be supported fully.

B-2: Employee Rights

a) Workplace Safety

We believe that every working person has the right to a safe and healthy workplace environment. Therefore, we urge the state to pass pertinent safety laws that would further protect West Virginia's entire workforce.

1. Special care should be devoted to our state's coal miners to ensure their safety.
2. Drug free workplaces should be a priority for the state as well.

b) Bargaining Rights

We urge state and local officials to support collective bargaining for improved wages, benefits, and working conditions.

c) Pensions/Retirement/Health Care

We believe that every working person should be able to retire without the worry that Social Security will be under-funded or eventually phased out. Pensions, health care, and other benefits earned on the job must be protected and guaranteed in retirement.

d) Wages

We support:

1. competitive, sustainable wages for all workers to afford them a better quality of life.
2. increasing the minimum wage to a living wage and the elimination of the minimum wage "loopholes."
3. equal pay for equal work.

e) Safety Net (Unemployment Compensation)

We support programs to protect, and provide a comfortable transition for, working families in crisis.

B-3: Creating a Level Playing Field

a) Fair Trade

We support trade with other nations, so long as there is a level playing field. American jobs should not be sacrificed to countries that do not enforce adequate safety, child labor, minimum wage, and environmental laws.

b) Outsourcing

We discourage the practice of outsourcing because it is detrimental to West Virginia working families. We support efforts to promote American and West Virginia made products.

c) Consumer Protection

We support preserving, protecting and improving our civil justice system so that anyone who is harmed by the misconduct and negligence of others can obtain justice in our state's courtrooms.

C – Law and Order

The West Virginia State Democratic Party advocates for the strict enforcement and preservation of the Constitution of the United States and the West Virginia Constitution. The ideals set forth in these historic documents help protect West Virginia citizens against crimes and invasion from foreign countries while also protecting the peace and dignity of the state.

We support:

C-1: Right to Bear Arms

The U.S. Constitution, including the Second Amendment — the right to bear arms.

C-2: National Guard

Sufficient numbers and funding of National Guard personnel to protect citizens within the state. The preservation of their facilities and equipment stationed here should be a priority too.

C-3: Incarceration

Appropriate alternatives to incarceration, such as home confinement, drug courts, day report centers, and community based treatment should be pursued for non-violent offenders

C-4: Immigration

Fair and humane immigration laws that are enforced to protect the legal residents of the State of West Virginia and the United States of America.

C-6: Funding

Adequate, sustained, and effective monitoring of funding for law enforcement, the judicial system, corrections, and legal-aid are necessary to maintain access to justice for all citizens.

D – Good Government

The Democratic Party stands for honest, open and fair government, of, for, and by the people. All elected officials must be held to a higher moral standing and be held accountable to the West Virginia electorate.

Therefore, the West Virginia State Democratic Party supports and will work toward improving and/or attaining the following:

D-1: Ethical conduct of all elected officials.

D-2: Responsible spending and balanced budgets.

D-3: Ensuring that governmental operations strictly follow federal and state laws, codes, and/or guidelines.

D-4: Legal, clean elections with full disclosure of donors and spending is critical to an informed electorate to sustain our democracy.

D-5: Adequate polling places, including more community-based (satellite) early voting locations, and access for the disabled are necessary to promote participation.

D-6: Improved public education about candidates running for office and the electoral process. We also encourage better civics education and voter registration drives in high schools.

D-7: Placing a high priority on providing competitive salaries, benefits, and opportunities for all public employees and public servants.

D-8: We oppose voter suppression efforts that make it unnecessarily difficult to vote, such as the so-called “voter ID laws.”

E – Environment

The West Virginia State Democratic Party is dedicated to working toward a cleaner, healthier environment that promotes energy independence. As a moral obligation to future generations, the West Virginia State Democratic Party advocates for broad improvements in federal and state energy policies to combat increasingly serious environmental issues both globally and here at home.

E-1: Energy Independence

- a) We support energy independence that uses “clean-coal” technology to fuel and power America and the expansion of West Virginia’s energy resources to include our rich natural gas deposits and all forms of clean and renewable energy.
- b) We support responsible drilling practices that respect the mineral and property rights owners.

E-2: Clean Air & Water

We support enforcement of the Clean Air & Water Acts to help preserve our environment. West Virginians have a right to safe drinking water and clean air to breathe.

E-3: Reclamation

- a) We believe that reclamation of mined areas should be complete.
- b) We strongly support enforcement of regulations with regard to all extractive industries.

E-4: Clean Communities

We support and encourage efforts to reduce litter and encourage recycling and recognize not only their environmental, but also their potential economic impact.

F – Health and Social Issues

The health and welfare of West Virginia residents should remain at the forefront of policy discussions as the status of our citizens’ health remains an urgent concern. West Virginia Democrats believe that government, at every level, should not interfere with an individual’s or family’s right to make a personal or medical decision.

F-1: Health

- a) We support the concept of a national health care system.
- b) We support the development of a new vision of health and welfare in West Virginia.
- c) We care about the physical, mental, and social health of all residents.
- d) We support the continued search for creative ways to improve health care quality.
- e) We support expansions of coverage to those with preexisting conditions, to allow children to stay on their parents insurance longer, to treat women equally, to cover mental illness, and to promote preventive care.

F-2: Health Care Delivery Systems

We commit to ensuring our citizens full access to quality health care professionals and facilities.

F-3: Social

- a) We support existing programs, i.e., Medicare, Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Money Follows the Person (MFP).
- b) We believe that public assistance should be a second chance, not a way of life.

F-4: Children and Families

We are committed to strengthening family life and, therefore, continue to support:

- a) Vacation time, which enhances family life, health, and wellness, and increases workplace productivity.
- b) The right to safe, quality daycare or after-school care for children.
- c) The rights of consumers to choose in-home care over institutional care.
- d) Full funding of effective intervention services for families in crisis, i.e., domestic violence.
- e) An aggressive, effective, and fair child support collection system.
- f) Where warranted, a safe and secure, monitored visitation and/or exchange site in each county.
- g) Research, planning, comprehensive family life education, and policies that support healthy child bearing.
- h) Programs to take a multi-faceted approach to educating teenagers on how to prevent unwanted pregnancies - "abstinence only" programs do not work.
- i) Programs and laws, such as the "Violence Against Women Act" to reduce and eliminate domestic violence.

F-5: Seniors

- a) We recognize that senior citizens are an integral part of our society.
- b) We are committed to helping seniors retain their independence, dignity, and standard of living.
- c) We believe that senior centers across our state provide programs that are critical to the well being of this valued population.
- d) We are committed to finding and implementing solutions to critical issues facing the aging population, namely: health care, nutrition, exercise, transportation, housing, and fraudulent schemes.
- e) We recommend an increase in geriatric education for medical students in all state medical schools.
- f) Medicare and Social Security must be protected and adequately funded. Efforts to privatize them or convert them into vouchers should be opposed.

F-6: Health Education

We support a comprehensive health education program by:

- a) Supporting wellness centers, well lit and safe outdoor neighborhood playgrounds, and hiking, biking, and walking trails.
- b) Restoring full school physical education programs that include nutrition, wellness, recess, and the promotion of an overall healthy lifestyle.
- c) Supporting music and art programs and our cultural heritage, recognizing their therapeutic value.
- d) Encouraging families and work places to participate in physical activities on a daily basis.
- e) Educating citizens about healthy eating habits and wellness programs.
- f) Providing clear information and promoting awareness of existing programs and facilities to support health among citizens.

F-7: Civil Rights

We continue our leadership in championing the civil rights of all persons and support laws and policies that recognize the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all citizens by:

- a) Dedicating ourselves to creating an environment in West Virginia that utilizes, respects, and celebrates the various cultural and social differences among our citizens.
- b) Leading the fight to ensure no American suffers discrimination or deprivation of rights on the basis of race, sex, language, national origin, religion, age, military or veteran status, economic status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status or other characteristic irrelevant to ability.
- c) Advocating that all citizens who desire to provide for themselves and their families should be allowed to work, free from discrimination, and should not lose their job based on any characteristic.
- d) Affirming our support for equal rights for women, the Equal Rights Amendment, the full enforcement of all laws barring job discrimination, enforcement of equal pay for work of equal value, and balanced appointments and hiring of women, minorities and the disabled to positions of major responsibility.
- e) Condemning bigotry of any kind and continuing to speak out in a unified voice against hatred and violence directed against any minority group.

F-8: Women's Health

The Democratic Party of West Virginia is concerned about the attacks on women's reproductive health and health services in the US and West Virginia. Although we have made significant gains in women's health in West Virginia, much remains to be done to improve quality of care and access to comprehensive health services, including family planning. West Virginian women are among the most likely to die of heart disease or lung cancer, to have diabetes, and to be obese. Babies born in West Virginia are more likely to be premature and have low birth weight. Mothers are more likely to smoke during pregnancy. In West Virginia, lack of education and insurance coverage are directly related to women's non-use of preventive health services and the unfortunately poor health outcomes. West Virginia has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the nation. Teen mothers are more likely to drop out of school and their children are more likely to become teen parents, perpetuating poverty and educational challenges.

The Democratic Party of West Virginia supports improvements in health services and well being for all females in West Virginia. Therefore, the Democratic Party of West Virginia will work to ensure that:

- all women have access to the full range of affordable comprehensive health services, including family planning;
- all women have access to age-appropriate education regarding nutrition, exercise, preventive health practices, and reproductive health;
- all women have access to quality health services, including gynecology, obstetrics, certified nurse-midwifery care, and reproductive health; and
- all health decisions, including reproductive health, are made privately without interference by the government, insurance companies, or employers.

G – Veterans

The West Virginia State Democratic Party stands beside the generations of men and women who have bravely served our country in the United States Armed Forces. West Virginia is home to one of the highest per capita veterans populations in the nation.

G- 1: Funding

We support:

- a) The continued pursuit of policies that ensure the necessary funding of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the West Virginia Veterans Administration for the highest quality health care for the nation's veterans.
- b) Guaranteed funding for veterans' programs now and in the future, making such funding a mandatory, rather than a discretionary, budget item to ensure viability from year to year.

G- 2: Health Care

- a) We believe that it is the responsibility of the United States and the State of West Virginia to provide accessible, quality care for service members who return home from military service on a daily basis.
- b) We support vigilance in ensuring that returning soldiers will receive quality care, not only for visible, physical wounds, but also for serious and debilitating mental wounds inflicted during service, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

G-3: Benefits

- a) We believe it should be a priority to provide veterans with concurrent receipt, ending the unjust prohibition against veterans' receiving both disability and retirement benefits.
- b) We recognize the need to reform the Survivors Benefits Plan (SBP), which allows personnel to pay a monthly premium to ensure that their spouses receive an annuity in the event of their demise.
- c) Veterans returning home, such as those from Iraq and Afghanistan, must be supported.
- d) Education and job training initiatives, such as Helmets to Hardhats, should be made available for veterans.