

THE 2008 PLATFORM OF THE MUSCATINE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

ADOPTED MARCH 15, 2008

We, the Democratic Party of Muscatine County, believe that the principle of all governments is to do as a society that which we cannot do as individuals and to assure that each of us as individuals enjoy freedom without encroaching on the freedoms of others.

We also support the concept that we each have the right as citizens to the basics of a good life, including security, an adequate diet, decent shelter, access to sufficient health care, a quality education commensurate with our abilities and opportunities for meaningful work.

We also believe that those of us blessed with abilities that allow us to acquire wealth beyond our basic needs have an obligation to share a portion of our surplus with those who are less fortunate. We believe an equitable tax system is the fairest way to assure that all of us meet this obligation.

We want our government to work with the world community for the elimination of armed conflicts among nations, as well as the establishment of guarantees of basic human rights for all peoples. We believe in the power of diplomacy and dialogue, especially with the U.S. as a recognized leader in the world community.

For these reasons we support an activist government which intervenes on behalf of the individual when others attempt to encroach on our individual liberties or create an advantaged position for themselves or their interests.

This is why we support strong protection of the rights of all minorities, the free expression of ideas and free choice in our individual actions so long as they do not interfere with the lives of others.

This is also why we oppose those who seek power, money, and influence for their own purpose at the expense of others or who try to impose their own particular set of values upon the rest of us.

The remainder of this platform is an affirmation of these broad principles.

Our common beliefs in the good that citizens and government can do give us our purpose. Our diversity in opinions is our strength. Together we form the character of the Democratic Party. This Platform Report embodies those characteristics.

AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT - AE

Agriculture is the bedrock of Iowa's economy, culture, and heritage. Farming as a way of life has suffered under federal farm policy during the last decade. The environment has become a key concern. The following problems need to be addressed.

Livestock Management - LM

We support:

1. Aid for crop diversification by farmers.
2. Education programs for farmers and livestock breeders.
3. Preservation of our farmland, wilderness and wetlands.
4. Legislative review of the "nuisance" lawsuits against livestock operations passed by the Legislature in H.F. 519.
5. Giving county boards of supervisors and/or county zoning boards' authority to have review and final approval in the siting of large livestock confinement operations.
6. A modification in the tax system to give tax breaks to landowners and land users who enter into conservation agreements.
7. More restrictive control over environmentally unsound farming organizations.

Environmental Safe Energy - SE

We support:

1. Incentives for alternative energy agriculture.
2. Economic incentives to process waste rather than dispose of it in landfills.

Bottle Bill & Recycling - BB

We support:

1. Extending the Bottle Bill concept to other recyclable materials.
2. Legislation that requires Iowa manufacturers of durable goods to:
 - a. Label product parts as to their recyclability.
 - b. To establish resource recovery centers.
3. Use of recycled tire material in environmentally sound ways.

Environmental Enhancement & Regulation - ER

We support:

1. The gradual imposition (over a 20-year period) of revenue-neutral green taxes on emissions, products, or activities that are to be discouraged.
2. Severance taxes on virgin resources.
3. Defining commercial crime so that corporations are held more accountable for environmental damage.
4. Repeal of the tax law that allows the cost of litigation to be tax-deductible as a business expense.
5. Increasing funds for the Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection Program.
6. Strengthening toxic emission limits on all disposal processes.
7. Greater responsibility on waste generators to recycle and reduce their amount of waste.
8. An economy in which industrial waste becomes a raw material for another process.
9. Repeal of the Iowa Anti-Stringency Rule for Air Quality.

Watershed Management - WM

We support:

1. More funding to local governments to build appropriate wastewater infrastructure.
2. Reinstating the wetlands review process with consideration for geographical differences and preservation/expansion of wetlands through the federal Conservation Reserve Program or other farm/non-farm programs.
3. An increase in provisions that deal appropriately with non-point source pollution runoff.

Sustainable Rural Development - SD

We support:

1. That all existing and future funds collected by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for environmental, conservation or recreational use should remain under the control of the Department, rather than the State's General Fund.
2. Zoning flood plain areas for land-use activities (parks, open space, recreation, wildlife preserves, agriculture), which facilitate flood prevention and control and mitigate economic damage.

ECONOMY, COMMERCE AND LABOR - EC

The underlying problem with the economy is an extreme misdistribution of income between the working class and the capital owners. When a CEO can make 300 million dollars while an average worker's wages haven't even kept pace with

inflation, what results is a dysfunctional market economy starved for consumption spending. The average American has had to fuel his/her spending with debt obtained by borrowing on the equity of their home. That phantom equity has now evaporated.

Any system, including the market economy, that gets too far out of balance does not function properly. Certain constraints need to exist to keep the market economy from slipping into a dysfunctional state. Balance is the essence of stability. Nothing short of this will guarantee permanence.

Job Security - JS

We support:

1. An effective federally funded tuition assistance program targeted at professions in demand for all U.S. citizens.
2. Financial deterrents to prevent companies/factories from taking their businesses outside the U.S.
3. Eliminate labor arbitrage by canceling all Temporary Worker Visa programs (L-1, H1-B, etc.), and establish tax penalties for firms that expand their workforce above some threshold through outsourcing, or replacement hiring in foreign locations.
4. Fair trade agreements that ensure nations will offer decent wages, humane working conditions, and sound environmental policies.

Budget & Taxation – BT

We support:

1. Two year, 800 billion dollar emergency *Infrastructure Investment Jobs Creation Program* (IIJCP) aimed at building new interstate highways, mass transit systems, schools, bridges, public hospitals, libraries, and assorted public buildings.
2. Taxation of corporate profits at a higher rate for firms that exceed a threshold level of jobs outsourced to a foreign country.
3. Taxation at a higher rate on individual yearly income received from any corporation, not-for-profit organization, or any form of legal entity where the total income exceeds the U.S. average yearly median individual income by 200%.
4. Close loopholes and make it illegal for individuals and corporations to set up off shore entities to avoid paying U.S. taxes.
5. Extending the middle class tax cuts including child tax credit and marriage penalty relief.
6. Return to the income tax rates for upper-income Americans that we had in the 1990s.
7. A substantial reduction in personal residential property taxes for citizens

over 65 years of age who live on low fixed incomes.

8. Increase Iowa funding for "Aid to Dependent Children".
9. A balanced federal budget.

Worker's Rights & Safety – WR

We support:

1. Repeal of all legislation that inhibits the right's of individuals to organize under labor unions regardless of position or any other currently disqualifying classification.
2. Passage of the *Employee Free Choice Act* so that unions can organize for fair wages and safe working conditions.
3. Allowing workers to redress their worker compensation cases through the courts.
4. Increasing work-related death benefits.
5. Requiring insurers to pay all bills directly that result from an on-the-job injury, including rehabilitation service.
6. Requiring business to meet all state and federal labor laws.

EDUCATION - ED

School Funding – SF

We support:

1. Raising Iowa teacher salaries to 25th in the nation.
2. Full funding of Head Start.
3. Increased funding for services targeting illiteracy.
4. Increased federal funding for veterans' educational benefits.
5. Student loan forgiveness for Iowa teachers teaching in areas where there are teacher shortages.
6. Top quality and meaningful professional development for teachers and educational support personnel.
7. Full funding of Pre-K-12 educational mandates.

Public School Programming - SP

We support:

1. Decentralized decision-making in schools.
2. New technology in schools.
3. Multi-cultural, non-sexist curricula with a global emphasis.
4. Expanded vocational education curricula and program funding.
5. Educational programs in family life responsibility.

6. Special education programs and alternative education programs
7. Curriculum designed to challenge every child.
8. Changing the state standards to start foreign language in early elementary years.
9. Retention of the calculation of an allowable growth rate.
10. Retention of the standing unlimited appropriation for financing school districts.
11. The appropriation of adequate state funds for competitive salaries for all Iowa school employees.
12. Timely delivery of school aid payments.
13. Requiring teacher certification or verified satisfactory educational progress for those who instruct children.
14. Lower student- teacher ratio.
15. The use of multiple criteria, as opposed to the sole use of standardized testing, for educational assessment and school funding.

We oppose:

1. Public funding for nonpublic K-12 schools.
2. Cutting art, music, physical education, counseling programs and nurses to balance school budgets.
3. The No Child Left Behind Act as it is currently implemented.

Higher Education - HE

We support:

1. Standardization of workload determination for community college instructors.
2. Fully funding community colleges while guaranteeing that no school receives less funding than the previous year.
3. Renewed emphasis on undergraduate instruction.
4. Increased student aid for college education through grants, scholarships, and loans expanding eligibility.
5. Programs of public service for student loan repayment.
6. Uniform collection of student loan repayments.
7. Low interest loans based on family income.
8. Programs which fight "brain drain" through loan forgiveness for graduates who stay in Iowa.
9. Increasing funds so that job training programs at community colleges are fully funded.
10. Increasing community college faculty salaries so that they match and then surpass the national average.

GOVERNMENT & LAW - GL

Campaigns and Elections - CE

We support:

1. The implementation of the Voter Owned Iowa Clean Elections Act.
2. A Constitutional amendment to reform the electoral college.
3. The adoption of a national holiday for holding federal elections.
4. Universal voter registration.
5. District of Columbia statehood.
6. Increasing minorities in elected offices.
7. Third party independent ethics oversight of elected officials.

We oppose:

1. Automatic pay raises for elected officials, including exorbitant cost of living increases.

Civil Rights - CR

We support:

1. Direct access to courts by individuals seeking remedies under federal and state civil rights acts.
2. Restoration of full funding and staffing for the Iowa Civil Rights Commission.
3. Addition of political affiliation and sexual orientation as protected categories in federal and state civil rights acts.
4. Implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
5. Ensuring the confidentiality of any individual's HIV/AIDS status, and to provide anonymous state-funded testing sites.
6. Modification of the U.S. Patriot Act consistent with longstanding Constitutional protections.
7. Passage of an equal rights amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the passage of the Iowa Equal Rights Amendment.

We oppose:

1. Law establishing English as the official language of any governing body at any level.

Taxes & Social Security - TS

We support:

1. A progressive income tax without loopholes for the wealthy.
2. A cap on personal residential taxes for fixed-income senior citizens over age 65.
3. Inheritance tax on estates over \$10 million.
4. Protection of the Social Security Trust Fund from uses other than benefit payments.
5. Separation of the Trust Fund from the unified federal budget.
6. Cost of living adjustments, and increasing earned income limits.
7. Removal of RICA payroll wage caps.
8. Elimination of the income tax on Social Security benefits.

We oppose:

1. The privatization of Social Security.

Reproductive Rights - RR

We support:

1. Reproductive freedom for all individuals, including freedom from government intrusion in personal decisions.
2. Full access to family planning information and procedures appropriate to each individual's needs.
3. Educational programs ensuring every pregnancy is a wanted pregnancy and to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.

We oppose:

1. Mandatory parental/spousal/partner notification prior to the exercise of any reproductive option.
2. Forced sterilization or contraception.
3. Government restrictions that impede access to abortion or contraception.

Criminal Justice - CJ

We support:

1. Equal justice for all.
2. The aggressive enforcement of laws prohibiting operation of motor vehicles while under the influence.
3. The extension of mental health and substance abuse programs.
4. Enhanced training and funding for police, programs and interrogation video taping.
5. Alternatives to prison terms with focus on rehabilitation.
6. Establish restorative justice programs.

We oppose:

1. The death penalty.
2. The present system of minimum mandatory sentencing.
3. Racial profiling.

Internet - IN

We support:

1. Universal access to high-speed Internet service.

Consumer Protection - CP

We support:

1. Mandatory inspection of domestic/imported goods.

Reasonable Gun Regulation - GR

We support:

1. Responsible ownership and care of weapons.
2. Better regulatory controls on gun dealers and gun shows.
3. A 30-day waiting period and mandatory background check when purchasing firearms.
4. Legislation stating no handgun can be sold or delivered to any convicted felon or person under age 21.
5. A ban on assault and automatic weapons.
6. The restoration of original "Brady Bill" with amendments.
7. The Second Amendment in its entirety.
8. Firearm and hunting safety classes.

Veterans - VA

We support:

1. Continued cooperation with the Vietnamese government in accounting for all POWs/MIAs and accountance of all recoverable remains.
2. Full and complete healthcare, education, housing, and other benefits to all members of the Armed Forces.

Immigration Reform - IR

We support:

1. An earned path to citizenship for the undocumented workforce.
2. Family reunification using current family backlogs.
3. Driver's license and insurance requirements to insure legal driving and safety for all.
4. Passage of the Iowa Dream Act allowing children of undocumented persons to gain higher education.
5. Respect for human, civil, and labor rights.

Participation in Government - PG

We support:

1. The governor's executive order re-instating voting rights for ex-felons.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES – HH

A caring community provides a safety net of health and human services to meet the basic needs of all people within its borders without discrimination. The goal is to enable individuals and families to reach their full potential.

Comprehensive reform of health care (mental and physical) is needed. Affordable, accessible, and quality health care are basic human rights not privileges.

Universal Health Care Coverage - UH

We support:

1. Universal health care coverage for all Americans, single payer, tax-based, no deductibles, no co-pays.
2. Nationally regulated standards of quality with accountability to agreed upon standards.
3. Health care includes:
 - a. Traditional health care plus chiropractic, acupuncture, full vision coverage including vision wear, dental and dental wear, hearing including hearing devices, prosthetic and assistive devices, prescription drug coverage, long term care, preventive care, mental health and substance abuse services,
 - b. Full and unrestricted access for reproductive health services; including family planning, contraceptive services, RU 486 and other emergency contraceptives, abortion and fertility services.

4. Physician and hospital choice.
5. Increased funding for HIV and stem cell research.
6. Strict confidentiality of patient records with patients controlling access to their records and genetic information.
7. Effective cost controls.

HUMAN SERVICES PROGRAMS - HS

We support:

Child Protection and Welfare

1. Fully funded programs promoting child health, safety, development and pre-natal care.
2. Fully funded child welfare programs with attention to family preservation and permanency planning.
3. Foster care for children up to age 21 that also includes services for independent living.
4. Comprehensive parenting training for parents in need.
5. Fully funded domestic violence shelters, prevention services and outreach.

Affordable Housing - AH

We support:

1. Construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation of affordable housing.
2. Creative programs, which encourage home ownership for poor and low-income people.

Homeless Services - HS

We support:

1. Providing homeless people with food, shelter, financial services, educational opportunities as well as greater access to social services, job and training opportunities.
2. Broaden the dissemination of public information concerning housing programs.

3. Increase Section 8 housing vouchers and offer incentives to landlords for accepting the vouchers.

4. Explore and institute creative options to increase permanent housing for the homeless and poor.

Social Security – SS

We support:

1. Preserving Social Security as a social insurance program

Disability Services – DS

We support:

1. Improving accessibility and full participation on all aspects of life.

2. Ending discriminatory employment practices and policies.

3. Improving early diagnosis and treatment.

4. Improving respite and in-home services.

Elderly Services – ES

We support:

1. Providing services and funding for older Iowans to enable them to live independently as long as possible.

We oppose:

1. Recognizing that faith based and private organizations provide a broad range of services, we oppose relying on them extensively.

2. Privatization of Social Security

3. Mandatory sentencing for drug related offenses

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS – IA

The foreign policy of the United States should not sacrifice human rights for political or economic expedience. We support forms of conflict resolution that

focus on diplomacy while avoiding the use of military force. We must work to eliminate fear and aggression as a political tool.

We support the continuing participation of the U.S. in the United Nations as an efficient means for reconciling international issues and dealing with mutual concerns facing the global community.

The Rule of Law - RL

We support:

1. Adherence to international norms that the U.S. has agreed to meeting.
2. The U.S. joining the international criminal court.

Humane Treatment - HT

We support:

1. U.S. military/security personnel are to meet international standards regarding treatment of prisoners of war and security detainees.
2. Access to federal courts to people detained by presidential order.

Cuba (relations with) - CU

We support:

1. Movement toward normalization of relations.

The Middle East (peace in) - ME

In the Israel/Palestine Conflict we support:

1. The U.S. engaged as an impartial broker, promoting negotiations in order to achieve peace and security for Israel as well as a secure, viable and contiguous Palestinian state.
2. Re-evaluation of U.S. military aid to Israel and transition to humanitarian aid to Israelis and Palestinians.

We oppose:

1. The existence and continued construction of the Israeli "separation wall".
2. Continued construction of Israeli settlements on disputed lands within the West Bank.
3. The demolition of Palestinian homes.

Iraq War - IW

We support:

1. A quick return of Iraq to a self-governing sovereign nation.
2. An Iraqi government that reflects international democratic standards and is established under the auspices of the United Nations.
3. Fair, free and open elections in Iraq as determined by the Iraqi people.
4. The ending of the U.S. military's status as an occupying force and internationalization of forces needed in Iraq for humanitarian purposes.
5. A specific and measurable timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel as well as a timeline for humanitarian/international support.
6. A bi-partisan investigation into the disputed 'weapons of mass destruction' and the rush to war in Iraq.
7. Return the National Guard personnel and equipment to pre-Iraq War levels.

Response to Terrorism - RT

We support:

1. A SMART (Sensible, Multilateral American Response to Terrorism) Security Plan that would take leadership to:
 - a) Strengthening international institutions and diplomacy;
 - b) Reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction by renouncing development of new nuclear weapons and strengthening international disarmament treaties;
 - c) Investing in international peacekeeping/development and education and cultural programs/exchanges.

Training Terrorists (against) - TT

We support:

1. Closing of all government schools that train in unethical methods.