

YDA PLATFORM 2005

VALUES • VOICES • VICTORIES

PARTY STRUCTURE

We believe . . .

- **Acceptance of diverse viewpoints is fundamental to a well-functioning democracy and an inclusive society**
- **We should be proud of our values, especially in the face of opposition**

We will act . . .

- To implement a nationwide strategy, believing that there are Young Democrats in every state in the Union, and that the giving up on the next generation in state currently controlled by Republicans means conceding them permanently.
- To recruit 435 Democratic candidates for Congress and all 100 seats in the Senate. We believe that Young Democrats should be encouraged to stand up and support the beliefs and ideals of their communities and the Democratic Party by running and representing the voters.
- To build up the Young Democrats by running Young candidates in local and state office races, so that no election goes uncontested and no chance to build Young Leaders is missed. To do this, we must recruit, fund and train those candidates, in support of this we will help local chapters find races in which to run Young Candidates.
- To increase peer-to-peer communication by speaking with progressive and democratically allied issue groups, by using the internet to locate voters in our local communities, by speaking out to our friends and family members more and amongst ourselves less and by framing our discussions by talking about the future.
- By becoming involved in local democratic clubs and other progressive organizations and gaining leadership positions with such groups so as to reinforce our commitment to the Party and its ideals. We will also request to be included at all levels of the Democratic Party, including state and local executive committees, allowing the voice of the Young Democrats and future leaders of the Democratic Party to be heard and listened to.
- By never conceding that there are races that cannot be won, or issues that should be avoided, or by taking a step back from this vital fight for the our nation's future.

GOVT. & ELECTORAL REFORM

- The Young Democrats of America support fair and free elections.
- We believe the federal government should be in charge of standardizing voting procedures and devices in order to avoid discrepancies and to ensure that votes cast are tabulated scientifically and impartially.
- We support efforts to find cost-effective methods to implement non-precinct voting.
- We support early voting, and Election Day as a national holiday.
- We believe voter registration should be open up to and including Election Day.
- We support having elections on a day that does not disenfranchise any group.
- The Young Democrats of Americas support thorough campaign finance reform to ensure that money is not a deciding factor in the outcome of elections.
- We believe that the federal government should encourage all Americans to participate in the democratic process.
- We will not tolerate voting impediments or voter intimidation in any form. We oppose any law that would require identification to vote. In addition, we oppose any attempt to purge voter rolls.
- We support state and federal agencies in providing ongoing absentee ballot application services. We also support uniform national standards for voter registration and absentee ballot application allowing all citizens, regardless of state residence, to apply for and participate in ongoing absentee voter status.
- We support state efforts to restore voting rights to ex-felons.
- We believe that citizens of the District of Colombia should have voting representation in Congress equal to one of the 50 states with same population.
- We support providing the American citizens of Puerto Rico with a fair process to determine their final, non-colonial and non-territorial political status, which will define their future relation to the United States of America either as a state of the union or as an independent nation.
- As electronic voting is becoming more popular and widely used the we strongly supports a paper trail requirement that protects individual privacy while preventing fraud.
- We support the formation of an independent commission to construct district lines that accurately represent the electorate.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Trade

We believe that free and fair trade can benefit the United States in today's global economy and that the trade liberalization process can be a forum for raising the environmental and labor standards of our trading partners, thus creating a global race to the top.

We Support:

- Including rigorous labor and environmental standards in all trade agreements to improve the living and working conditions throughout the world.
- Negotiating trade agreements with a strong priority placed on raising environmental and labor standards as is given to opening markets to American goods.
- Developing the draft Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement further to bring it into compliance with the aforementioned goals.
- Investing in the creativity of American workers and businesses to maximize the competitiveness of the United States in the global economy.
- Retraining programs specifically targeting American workers who are displaced by trade liberalization so that they can quickly return as productive members of the US economy.

Labor

We Support:

- The right of workers to organize unions without employer intimidation or interference.
- The rights of workers and employers to enter into agreements for card check union recognition and oppose efforts to make such agreements illegal.

We Oppose:

- Any effort to silence labor's voice through "paycheck protection" legislation.
- Any effort to restrict the right of workers to organize through "right to work" legislation.

We believe that in an era of globalization, unions and employers must adopt new practices which are better suited to the rules of a service-based, flexible economy in a joint effort to expand opportunities for workers to organize.

Social Security

The Young Democrats of America are proud that Social Security has been the most successful American social program for 70 years and wish to ensure that future generations of Americans are able to enjoy this hard earned right.

- We support a Social Security system that protects the funding, benefits, and long-term viability that Social Security provides for young Americans.
- We oppose the privatization of Social Security
- We believe Social Security must always remain both social and secure.
- We oppose any effort to reduce Social Security benefits.
- We believe that the taxable Social Security income cap should be raised from its current level.

The Federal Budget

We believe that long-term budget deficits are tantamount to a federal youth tax. As such, the government should take concrete steps to balance the budget.

We support:

- Restoration of the requirement that any increase in discretionary spending or decrease in revenue be offset in corresponding decreases in spending and/or increases in revenue.
- Ensuring that the steps taken to bring the federal budget into balance should be consistent with the policy goals of this platform, and specifically should not be taken at the expense of vital social programs.
- Refraining from the passage of further tax cuts so long as the Federal budget remains out of balance.
- Enacting long-term budget plans that are designed to balance the Federal budget over the course of the business cycle, offsetting deficits during economic slowdowns with surpluses during periods of strong growth.
- We support the Estate Tax, recognizing its power to help each generation rise or fall on its own merits. We also recognize that family farms and businesses are important and that this tax must protect and take into account these unique circumstances.

Immigration

The Young Democrats of America are proud of America's history as an immigrant nation.

- While supporting secure borders, we believe Americans show a welcoming spirit to those of diverse backgrounds and other cultures.
- We believe an effective way of enforcing immigration laws is to prevent companies from using illegal immigration labor.

- We deplore the extensive rate of illegal immigration into the United States, and its consequences in both fiscal terms and in human cost.
- We support the humanization of immigration laws, to allow decent, non-threatening immigrant who seek only an honest living and a commitment to community to enter our country.
- We recognize the value that immigrant labor brings to our economy. We further recognize the transnational cultural awareness and commerce tied to migrant work.
- We support day labor passes as a way to curb illegal immigration.
- We oppose vigilantism as an answer toward immigration regulation and encourage federal and local prosecution of such practices.

Poverty

- We support the creation of a federal fund that would identify the most impoverished areas of the nation and develop a plan for said areas to break the cycle of poverty. The aforementioned fund would be responsible for funding improvements to the infrastructure roads, schools, hospitals, and the like.
- The Young Democrats are opposed to predatory lending practices because such practices prey upon lower- and middle-income families.

INTERNATIONAL POLICY

We believe . . .

U.S. foreign policies should promote liberty, democracy and opportunity throughout the world in a truly collaborative fashion with our allies that shuns unilateralism and upholds the Wilsonian principle of peace without victory.

We support:

- The efforts of young people to have the most direct influence over the foreign policy interests of the United States. As the primary demographic of soldiers serving overseas, we as young people have a vested interest in solving and preventing unnecessary conflicts that put young Americans in harm's way.
- In the long-term security interests of the United States, efforts to determine a timely, responsible withdrawal from Iraq that leaves Iraqis responsible for their sovereign future without a permanent American presence in the Middle East.
- Efforts to achieve long-term peace in the Middle East by encouraging reconciliation efforts between Israelis and Palestinians that recognize the injustices suffered by both sides

- The value of diplomacy as the most desirable way of achieving the United States' strategic goals, especially within the setting of the United Nations, incurring the lowest cost to American taxpayers and lives of our soldiers
- A repeal of the military doctrine of preemptive warfare when a clear threat has not been demonstrated to the security interest of the United States.
- Policies that support U.S. trade relations with and the provision of aid to nations that uphold democratic values
- Increased U.S. support for programs promoting the equal access to resources and opportunities for women throughout the world.
- Increased international efforts to address the broad health, social, economic, and political effects of the AIDS pandemic, including making generic medicines available to underdeveloped nations.
- Giving underdeveloped nations the tools they need to confront the challenges faced by poverty, hunger, starvation and disease.
- Stronger international efforts to protect women and children from sexual violence, whether as a result of conflict or sanctioned by law, and to provide requisite support and health care for victims.
- A strong commitment to the concerns of human rights, labor, religious freedom, environmental, and health issues in the negotiations and implementations of all international agreements.
- Encouraging our trading partners, especially those who are party to Free Trade Agreements with the US or have favored nation status, to uphold safe and fair working conditions and a living wage.
- Continued efforts of the United Nations and other fair and efficient inter-government organization to further diplomacy, peace and justice in the global community.

HOMELAND SECURITY

We believe . . .

Our government must fulfill its obligation to protect its citizens from foreign and domestic dangers, while upholding the freedoms and ideals for which this nation stands.

We support:

- Funding homeland security operations in states and localities in proportion to the risk that is faced therein;

- Promoting interaction between communities and police forces so that communities understand the operations of police and feel that all Americans are equal and vital partners in homeland defense;
- Policies that take affirmative steps to ensure the safety of America's public and infrastructure, whilst respecting civil rights and ensuring that no American feels suspect for any racial, ethnic, or class distinction.
- Redeploying National Guard from foreign theaters to their homeland security duties, recalling the historical purpose of the National Guard.
- Raising the level and quality of inspections at all points of entry into the United States, including commercial shipping ports.
- Strengthening our cooperation with allies to prevent terror attacks at home and abroad.
- Maintaining a strong defense against threats foreign and domestic.
- Increasing soldier pay and veterans' benefits out of respect for the vital sacrifice that members of the military willingly undertake on behalf of all Americans.
- Repealing policies that prohibit or otherwise restrict Americans from serving openly in the military based on their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- Restricting the proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and securing poorly guarded nuclear, chemical and biological materials.

LAW AND JUSTICE

- The Constitution is the cornerstone of our democratic system of government. This is the supreme law of the land, and its protections apply equally without prejudice or bias to all citizens and people of the United States.
- The Constitution, Bill of Rights and Declaration of Independence incorporate inalienable rights, and we dedicate ourselves to ensuring that these rights never be denied to any American. These rights of life, liberty, privacy, property, and the pursuit of happiness place no barrier upon race, religion, color, gender, gender identity, ethnic background, disability, age, sexual orientation or any other ascribed or achieved status or trait that a person may have.

Criminal Justice

- We support our safety and law enforcement professionals and recognize that their services are vital to a safe and secure America.
- We, however, condemn the ongoing practices of profiling by race, socioeconomic status, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, ethnic background, national origin, or disability

- practiced by individual law-enforcement officers and agencies alike. This practice is a threat to public safety and welfare, and is an insult to the lives of Americans who have fought to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the rights embodied therein.
- Juveniles convicted of criminal offenses requiring incarceration should be housed in facilities that are safe and clean. Emphasis must be placed on rehabilitation of juvenile offenders rather than mere incarceration. Juveniles who are accused of crimes should enjoy the same Due Process rights as adults. At no time should a juvenile be incarcerated at a facility that incarcerates adults.
 - We support reforms in sentencing procedure to allow greater judicial flexibility regarding sentences, alternative punishments, and community or victim redress, particularly for non-violent offenders.
 - All incarceration facilities shall be safe and clean. It shall be unlawful for any custodial officer to have sexual relations with those whom they guard.
 - We believe that prisoner-to-prisoner rape will be considered a felony and will be dealt with in a court of law.
 - We advocate that police forces refrain from the excessive use of force and police brutality, and we support programs that prevent and punish such actions.
 - We advocate that police forces use the least invasive methods of investigation necessary to uphold the law. The war on drugs and terrorism should not be used to justify widespread violation of privacy and civil rights in the United States and abroad.
 - We believe that the portions of the Patriot Act that violate civil liberties and Fourth Amendment protections should be repealed.
 - We believe that the freedoms embodied in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights include dignity in death and the freedom to choose the means of one's own passing. We therefore oppose any statutes that criminalize euthanasia or assisted suicide.
 - We support the legal right of every law-abiding citizen to own and possess firearms. We support strict background checks prior to any firearm purchase, including purchases at gun shows and Internet purchases. We support safety training in gun usage and handling techniques prior to the first firearm purchase. We support enforcement of the laws relating to intermediaries who aid in the furnishing and distribution of firearms to those who cannot legally acquire them. We call on the federal government to invest the necessary resources to accomplish instant background checks. We further support the renewal of the assault weapons ban and other commonsense measures to keep the most dangerous weapons off our streets.
 - We advocate the initiation of studies by both the Food and Drug Administration and independent research facilities or organizations regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the medicinal uses of marijuana. Additionally, we support granting people who are seriously ill or debilitated access to marijuana as prescribed by a physician to alleviate symptoms and to improve their quality of life, without fear of being charged or convicted of a crime.

- We support the decriminalization of marijuana.
- Secret evidence should never be used in connection with any criminal proceedings. People who are subject to deportation proceedings shall have the same Due Process rights as those accused of a crime.

Civil Justice

- We oppose tort reform that limits a citizen's right to redress in the judicial system.
- We oppose the recent changes to the bankruptcy code which make it more difficult for working class families and small business owners to discharge insurmountable debt and once again become contributing members of the American economy.
- We oppose the use of contracts of adhesion that include non-negotiated, mandatory binding arbitration clauses, imposed on parties with unequal bargaining power by parties with superior bargaining power.
- We are committed to ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to achieve the American dream. We strongly support local, state, and federal laws which promote equal opportunity for all Americans by prohibiting discrimination, based on race, gender identity, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
- We recognize, however, that systematic discrimination against women and minorities continues to plague our country. For this reason, we strongly support affirmative action programs. Affirmative action is not another form of discrimination. Affirmative action is a process by which institutions make opportunities available for minorities.
- Because we recognize that the criminal justice system is not without flaw in its determining the guilt or innocence of an individual and because we recognize that the imposition of the death penalty is grossly disproportionate, particularly in regard to racial minorities and indigent persons, we support a nationwide moratorium on or elimination of the death penalty.

CIVIL & HUMAN RIGHTS

We believe...

- All people deserve equal rights and equal access under the law.

We will act...

- To maintain the separation of church and state as essential to defending religious freedom for all Americans.
 - We therefore strongly protest all efforts to align public policy around the tenets of any specific religion, or to discriminate against elements of our citizenry based on religious doctrine.

- We will advocate for a pluralistic society where all people are treated with respect, dignity and equality under the law.

We support:

- A call on the U.S. Congress to establish a commission to examine the racial disparities in the criminal justice system and their effects on communities of color and the greater U.S. society.
- Passage of legislation that acknowledges the fundamental injustice of slavery and establishes a commission to study slavery's effect on U.S. society and the residual effects of slavery on currently living African Americans.
- Extension of official U.S. recognition of Native Hawaiian political rights similar to the status held by Native American and Alaska Native groups.
- Equal and compassionate treatment for those living with HIV and AIDS.
- Full legal and social equality for LGBT Americans.
- Federal, state and local employment non-discrimination laws that outlaw bias in hiring on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, color, disability, or religion.
- Increased funding for assistive technology and interpreters.
- Focused services for people with disabilities with improved outcomes in low income, minority, and rural communities.
- Affirmative action in higher education and employment.
- Addressing the 60% unemployment rate among youth with disabilities. Recommended policies include: removing disincentives to employment, as well as to the affordability of higher education, increasing investment in peer mentoring and job shadowing programs, and developing peer-to-peer youth information resource centers.
- Adopting legislation to create programs promoting the smooth transitioning of young persons with disabilities to higher education and career opportunities according to their interests and goals.
- Legislation to remedy the institutional bias in the Medicaid program so that young people with disabilities are able to receive services and supports in community settings, empowering them to pursue and attain their educational and career goals.
- Increased support for programs and curricula to raise awareness of the disability rights movement and to dispel stereotypes about disability.
- Increasing the minimum wage, and passage of federal, state and local living wage legislation to help Americans rise out of poverty.

- Adhering to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights using the influence of the government of the United States to pressure other nations into doing the same.

FAMILY

We believe...

Our society and government should treat all families equally, whether traditional or non-traditional, and support them to build stronger communities.

We support:

- Civil marriage equality for same-sex couples.
- Adoption and foster parenting laws that do not discriminate based on the attributes of sexual orientation, gender identity, or marital status.
- Day care programs for federal employees, and encourage employers to create such programs for their employees.
- Strict sentencing for convicted domestic violence offenders.
- Parental involvement in children's education and development of life and social skills.
- Creating a culture that values balancing family time with work.
- The value of faith as a driving principle behind our nation's highest ideals such as kindness, family values, grace, self-sacrifice, and community service.

We oppose:

- Marriage incentives that force families to stay together based on finances rather than love.
- State and local marriage discrimination amendments and laws.
- Laws that have a disproportionately negative impact on single individuals.

HEALTH & SOCIAL ISSUES

Health

The Young Democrats of America are strongly committed to securing an equitable healthcare system that values all people before profits. We believe in universal access to affordable, quality healthcare.

- We believe it is a national priority to maintain federal funding for medical research, disease prevention and education.
- Discrimination against any persons with HIV/AIDS for housing, employment, education, healthcare coverage, or medical care will not be tolerated.

- We strongly support continued funding for comprehensive scientific-based HIV/AIDS education, prevention, and research. We believe every effort must be made to protect the confidentiality of HIV-antibody testing.
- We believe that the healthcare financing industry should not discriminate based upon health status, physical or mental disability, sex, age, family composition, or sexual orientation.
- We believe in federal and state policies that strive to partner with the pharmaceutical industry to provide for affordable prescription drugs for everyone. Our priority should be to provide for our senior citizens, children, and the economically disadvantaged. We also believe that the federal and state governments have a responsibility to ensure that any such prescription drug program is fair to all. We also believe that all prescription drugs should be covered by healthcare.
- We believe that healthcare decisions should reflect patient preferences and sensitivities. To that end, we support funding for home health, hospice care, and Medicaid buy-in options.
- We support state policies that foster the creation and protection of programs to assist small businesses in the provision of health insurance.
- We support an expansion of state and federally funded embryonic stem cell research.
- We believe that where embryonic stem cell research offers a viable chance to find effective treatments to critical diseases where alternative research methods are not as promising or viable, we should enable rather than hinder this scientific work for the common good.
- We support the adoption of a true Patient's Bill of Rights by the Congress of the United States, including the right of patients to choose, along with their doctors, their own path of medical care, as well as the right to sue their HMO.
- We believe that abortion should be safe, legal, and rare. We believe that decisions regarding contraception and abortion are private decisions between a woman and her doctor. We oppose any unreasonable restrictions on a woman's right to legal abortion procedures.
- We believe that reforms are necessary to protect the individual while ensuring that skilled medical professionals may continue to practice and maintain affordable malpractice insurance.
- We believe that it is the federal government's responsibility to properly fund the medical establishment and emergency personnel – first responders, EMT's, firefighters and police – to be able to respond to crisis situations.
- We strongly oppose the application of the "global gag rule" to funds allocated for HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs in at-risk countries.

- We affirm that mental health is as important as physical health. In supporting parity and coverage by health insurers, we also support efforts to de-stigmatize mental illness and issues surrounding appropriate treatment.
- We recognize drug addiction to be a health issue, not a criminal issue, and should be dealt with as such.

Social Issues

The Young Democrats of America are strongly committed to the principles that are a matter of simple human dignity. The protections, services, and opportunities that this nation affords should be equally available to all. Therefore, we strongly oppose discrimination on any basis, including race, gender, sexual orientation, gender expression and identity, age, national origin, creed, religion, disability, or socioeconomic status.

- We believe that all women should have access to all reproductive options, including education, contraception, and abortion when necessary, regardless of socio-economic status.
- We believe that all women should have access to RU-486, the morning after pill, and other forms of emergency contraception, without a prescription.
- We support making affordable childcare a national priority.
- The Young Democrats of America strongly support comprehensive, science-based public education focused on family planning – a vital component of universal health care – which includes factual information on biology, birth control, sexually transmitted diseases, abortion, reproductive choices, and abstinence education for all people, regardless of sexual orientation. To that end, we also believe that all contraceptive methods should be included in medical coverage.
- We support the right of women to serve in all capacities and aspects of the military in both combat and non-combat capacities.
- We believe that individual victims of discrimination by state entities should have recourse to file civil lawsuits for damages in federal court under federal anti-discrimination laws.
- We believe in the right to affordable healthcare coverage for all Americans through a single payer system as the most cost effective means of achieving universal health care access.
- We support tough penalties for professional athletes caught using performance-enhancing drugs.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- We believe the United States currently leads the world in scientific research and technology development. Continued excellence requires government funding of research and higher education. We support strong incentives for scientific research and development.
- We believe that continued governmental support of space exploration has multiple benefits extending beyond the scope of space travel. We believe that space is an environment that must be respected and protected. We support responsible space programs that minimize dangerous chemicals and unnecessary debris being placed in Earth's orbit.
- We believe technology and scientific advances are primary mitigating factors to the United States' dependency on foreign oil. We vigorously support government funding for scientific research to reduce our fossil fuel dependency.
- We believe the fundamental right to privacy should extend to all activities in the digital world.
- We believe in the importance of copyright and the protection of intellectual property while confirming the necessity of fair use.
- We believe that continued research in technology security may require the open release of modern encryption and security advances and flaws. We believe that the release of this information is protected speech.
- We believe that Congress should limit patent rights where restricting new technology puts lives in danger, especially emphasizing patents on pharmaceuticals.

ENVIRONMENT

The Young Democrats of America recognize that a clean environment is critical to the health and safety of present and future generations of Americans. We therefore urge policies that aggressively protect our natural resources including our air, water, soil, forests, open spaces and promote energy independence.

- Because protecting the environment is an investment in our collective future, environmental concerns must become as integral to the considerations of corporate America as fiscal matters currently are. Corporations should be rewarded for pursuing environmentally sound business models and should be held accountable when their activities have an adverse impact on the environment. We therefore support policies designed to promote environmentally responsible business practices, such as tax incentives for "green" businesses, as well as aggressive enforcement of existing environmental statutes. We further support reform of public health and environmental statutes to make penalties for violation more costly than the expense of compliance.

- We believe in personal responsibility. Executives in industry should personally certify, , that their company is in compliance with environmental laws. Strict personal legal and financial consequences should result from false certification.
- We urge aggressive enforcement of environmental statutes such as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Recovery Act (CERCLA), among others, by both state and federal governments.
- We support efforts to promote environmental justice, including increased federal funding of Superfund programs and revitalization of brownfields.
- Policy decisions regarding environmental concerns should be based upon scientifically sound, peer-reviewed research. Government agencies and committees charged with making such decisions should further include scientists and individuals whose education, training and credentials demonstrate their integrity, objectivity and acceptance in the scientific community.
- We support incentives to encourage environmentally sustainable farming practices (agro-ecology).
- We support policies that encourage domestic carbon sequestration through the establishment of an open carbon sequestration market. Practices such as no-till land management allow the American farmer to capture a portion of the carbon monoxide and limit its release into our environment.
- We oppose policies that allow for the transportation of nuclear waste and highly toxic chemicals through large population centers. We further urge the development of policies and procedures to provide the highest standards of safety and security of our nation's nuclear and chemical facilities.

Natural Resources

- Our national parks, seacoasts, coastlines, and waterways are among our greatest assets. The government has a responsibility to maintain and to protect these national treasures. We oppose any initiative that irreparably damages our nation's natural habitat, including lifting moratoria on offshore drilling and related mapping activities.
- We recognize that our public lands are vital to the social and economic lives of all Americans. Public lands should be managed according to principles of multiple use and responsible stewardship, including preservation of open spaces. We oppose any policies that systematically subject public lands to use by destructive industries and interests to the exclusion of other Americans.
- We support reinstatement of the "roadless rule" in national forests and other public lands. We oppose oil exploration and mineral extraction in areas with fragile ecosystems, particularly the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge. We support aggressive efforts to protect the water resources and ecosystems of the Great Lakes, the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways.

- We oppose any attempt to weaken the Endangered Species Act as currently enacted. Americans have expressed a desire to protect the health and welfare of animals through a variety of statutes. However, these statutes and their implementing regulations are not aggressively enforced. We support adequate funding and aggressive enforcement of these statutes.

Energy

- We recognize that our future lies with clean energy, which will reduce pollution, diversify our national energy sources, promote national security and provide Americans with huge cost savings. Thus, we urge a strong national commitment to a clean energy future.
- The scientific community has reached consensus: global warming is real, and it is affecting us today. We support efforts to reduce and eliminate greenhouse gases, including aggressive promotion of public transportation and alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, hydrogen fuel cells, “clean” coal extraction, biomass, fuel cells, wave and tidal energy. Such new energy sources benefit not only the environment, but also American farmers and industries for which such new technologies represent untapped markets.
- We recognize that environmental decisions have transnational effects. Accordingly, we urge ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, which is an important step towards global reduction of greenhouse gas pollution.
- We support efforts to reduce mercury pollution, including the reduction or elimination of the single largest source of mercury pollution in the United States: coal-fired power plants. We support the elimination of the “grandfather” provisions of the Clean Air Act that exempt certain legacy coal-fired power plants from complying with current emissions standards.
- We support the long-term replacement of nuclear power with clean, renewable energy sources should be encouraged. We urge greater protection and vigilance to ensure the safety of existing nuclear plants, storage, and other facilities.
- We support long term efforts to conserve energy and reduce pollution by complementing our clogged interstate highway system with efficient regional and national high-speed rail systems.

RURAL ISSUES

We believe . . .

As a party of opportunity for all Americans, we must work to build strong rural communities based on family values that are vibrant places to live, work and play.

We support:

- Efforts to encourage the development of small businesses that are best positioned to serve the needs of rural communities.
- Measures to protect the unique character of rural communities, including smart growth policies that preserve farmland and open space while expanding economic opportunity for community residents.
- Efforts to support the development of family farms by protecting their ability to make a living off the land and successfully compete on a fair playing field with larger agribusiness corporations.
- Measures to encourage community involvement in the development process to ensure it benefits the community in the best way possible.
- The development of medical services and urgent care in rural areas so needed medical care is available as quickly as possible.
- The right of every citizen to own guns for hunting and sport.
- Expanding broadband Internet access to bridge the digital divide and attract young professionals to raise families, as well as business investment to create more economic opportunity.
- Efforts to encourage the development of arts & culture programs for students in rural communities.

URBAN ISSUES

We believe urban areas and communities are important economic, cultural, and social epicenters which are vital to our country's well being.

We believe these areas are rich in history and diverse, and support their continued preservation.

We believe urban centers have the highest population density and they contain the highest percentage of poverty by area.

We support downtown revitalization efforts through public and private partnerships, bringing community activists, business leaders, and government officials together to rebuild and reinvest in urban communities.

- This includes the funding and implementation of public transportation systems to reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- This includes smart growth policies to promote urban renewal while keeping racial and ethnic concerns in mind and attempting to preserve the character of a community.

- We do not support the use of eminent domain to take private property unless such taking is for traditionally public use such as the building of public facilities or roads.

We support the continued development and improved quality of government sponsored low-income housing.

We support the government sponsorship of urban mental health and substance abuse clinics to support urban residents in underserved communities.

We support more vigorous enforcement of the Fair Housing Act to prevent discriminatory practices.

We believe that since the Americans with Disabilities Act has not sufficiently addressed the lack of accessible housing for persons with disabilities, that government policy should promote the use of inclusive design principles in housing projects receiving federal funds.

We support the use of inclusionary zoning to ensure that urban neighborhoods reflect the full socioeconomic diversity of their cities.

EDUCATION

Public schools are the foundation and first lesson of democracy, bringing together families of diverse experience, ability, and backgrounds for the common purpose of learning. Public education should be the ultimate equalizer. As Democrats it is our top priority to mobilize all communities to eliminate the socio-economic achievement gap apparent in America today.

We support:

- Mechanisms that encourage new and innovative approaches to address educational challenges and needs.
- Mechanisms which help students, parents, educators, and the community to have a significant voice in their own education.
- Financial mechanisms which ensure consistent education funding regardless of economic cycles.
- Adequately funding public education on the state and federal level
- Fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Act on the national level.
- Increased funding for need-based grants, and changes to federal financial aid programs to ensure that taxpayers' investments are used efficiently to maximize benefits for all students. Financial obstacles should not interfere with any American's right to higher education.
- Comprehensive and effective sex education, including abstinence, contraceptives, same-sex sex education, HIV/AIDS and other STD prevention programs.
- Allowing every child to be able to attend pre-K, full day Kindergarten, and Head Start programs.

- The doctrine that all mandated programs be fully supported and funded by the mandating institution.
- Bilingual and multi-cultural education programs for everyone starting at an early age.
- A fair wage and benefits for teachers and annual cost of living increases for all levels of education
- Smaller class sizes which in turn improves the quality of education.
- A comprehensive financial literacy education, including responsible use of credit, basic knowledge of investments, and the importance of savings.
- Efforts opposing any funding or voucher program that would withdraw funding from public schools and redirect it to private and/or parochial institutions.
- A renewed effort to improve schools and quality of education in urban communities and high density areas.
- Rural schools and do not discriminate based on population density or sparsity. We also support efforts to keep rural schools open and allowing local autonomy in dealing with this issue.