



# Whatcom County Democratic Platform 2010 – 2011

## **Preamble**

As Democrats and as citizens of the United States of America, we support the rights guaranteed by our Constitution: personal freedoms, social and civil justice, privacy, security, and economic opportunity. Affirming that power and change ultimately rests with the people, we adopt this Platform to ensure that voters and candidates for public office understand and support our goals.

## **Agriculture and Forestry**

### **Our Values**

Socially and economically healthy agricultural and forest production regions are vital to the well-being of the nation.

Owner/operator farmers and foresters are the primary stewards of the land, and this type of business should be encouraged.

We must value and support solutions to the challenges of agriculture by having a connection to those who produce our food.

Agricultural soils and timber should be used in a way that maintains the viability of the resources indefinitely into the future.

Zoning is an important and appropriate tool for guiding land uses for the benefit of the greater community and region.

The economic viability of agricultural and forest resource areas require significant blocks of acreage and should be protected from urban encroachment and subdivision.

Land use policy should be used to reduce carbon emissions and energy use, protect sensitive environments, and protect the quality of resources held in common for all, such as water, soil, and air.

### **2010 Policy Priorities**

Seek resolution of competing water rights claims in Whatcom County, for the mutual benefit of fish, farms, people, and the environment

Expanding the Purchase and Transfer of Development Rights programs in Whatcom County as a means to protect farm and forest lands



## **Criminal Justice**

### **Our Values**

We believe that authorities, communities, and individuals must work together to prevent crime and to make our communities livable. We have a collective responsibility to help alleviate social conditions that lead to crime.

We believe that all people should have equal access to the criminal justice system and should be treated equally under the law.

### **2010 Policy Priorities**

The decriminalization and regulation of marijuana

End the death penalty in Washington State

A re-affirmation that the United States has signed the Geneva Conventions and that any violation constitutes a breach of US law

## **Economic Justice, Labor and Economy**

### **Our Values**

Fairness of economic opportunity and reward for working families is essential for the realization of a democratic society. Our government must step in to provide proper oversight and regulation for the protection of all our citizens, providing a leveler between business and consumers and employers and employees.

We need Reform of our banks and credit card companies that protects consumers from the reckless behavior of Wall Street

To ensure equal opportunity to access information, we support the policy of Net Neutrality to prevent corporate censorship

Workers are entitled to a safe work environment, the right to organize. a fair livable wage and trade laws that keep jobs in this country.

We believe in a tax structure that is judiciously based on ability to pay. Our government should have the ability to provide vital services in times of crises as well as times of prosperity.

### **2010 Policy Priorities**

Provide living wage jobs to Americans by offering work rebuilding and restoring our national infrastructure



Implement a strong and effective Financial Consumer Protection Agency

Pass the Employee Free Choice Act

## **Education**

### **Our Values**

Education is a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. Public Education particularly unites students of diverse experiences, abilities, and backgrounds for the common purpose of learning. A thriving public education system ensures our nation's bright future.

It is our collective duty to ensure that there is ample funding to support high quality and appropriate education for all children. We must ensure access to educational opportunities for all students and foster respect for the diverse cultural communities of Whatcom County.

We believe that public schools should be a safe place for all students

The work of public educators is vital and their salaries and benefits should be comparable with other professionals with similar experience and educational requirements.

### ***2010 Policy Priorities***

Full funding for prekindergarten through higher education including vocational and basic skills education

Eliminating the use of costly, high-stakes tests to assess school performance

Increasing and maintaining support for the creative and performing arts, vocational education, and physical education

## **Environment, Energy and Transportation**

### **Our Values**

Health of the physical environment directly impacts the short-term and long-term health of our citizens, communities and economy, and must be protected.

Fossil fuels are a finite and dwindling resource and we must swiftly transform our economy and technology to be based on renewable energy sources.

All countries and governments must respond swiftly and strongly to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to slow the rise in the global temperature and reduce the long-term effects of climate change, ocean acidification, and rising oceans levels.



Regulations must be used to ensure that the cost of environmental degradation be paid for by those who create the pollution or benefit from the action that caused the pollution.

### **2010 Policy Priorities**

Continued ban on oil drilling and exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Protect, strengthen and expand the renewable energy requirements of Initiative 937 passed in 2006 (15% of their electricity from new renewable resources by 2020 and to undertake all cost-effective energy conservation)

Enact local laws, regulations, and zoning that enable local public and private initiatives to develop renewable energy sources

Enact H.R.2454 - American Clean Energy And Security Act of 2009 (awaiting Senate action)

Clean up and elimination of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation site as a repository of additional nuclear waste

Clean up Puget Sound and waters emptying into it, and enact new laws or regulations as needed to eliminate pollution at the source

Enact the Clean Water Protection Act (H.R. 1310), which would protect Appalachia's streams by restoring the prohibition on using waste to fill streams and wetlands, a current practice of "mountaintop removal" coal mining

### **Foreign Policy**

#### **Our Values**

The United States must balance a strong defense with equitable, just practices and policy with other nations and peoples. Diplomacy, dialog and non-violent conflict resolution are in keeping with our nation's goals and principles and must be our first resort

Our principles, aspirations and interests are best advanced by supporting self-determination of all nations and supporting the rights, liberties and well-being of the peoples of all nations and ethnicities.

We support trade that is equitable to both parties and enforces workers' rights, environment rights and produces products that are safe for consumers.



## ***2010 Policy Priorities***

Speedy but responsible end to our occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Emphasize non-violent, humanitarian efforts to rebuild civil society, rehabilitate and repatriate refugees and support self-determination of the Iraqi and Afghani peoples

Federal policy opposing the death and injury to civilians in Palestine and Israel and working with both sides to seek peaceful resolution of this conflict. Support a peaceful, two-state solution

Call on all governments, including ours, to secure, reduce production, stockpiling, testing and use of nuclear weapons

## **Government and Election Reform**

### **Our Values**

It is essential that a government that supports its citizens without creating dependency, acts with the highest ethical standards and is answerable to the people it serves.

Transparency, compassion and careful planning are essential to a full and functioning democracy.

We support wide participation in the process by citizens and a rejection of the corrosive influence of corporate money on our government.

All who wish to be involved in the Democratic party in good faith are welcome to an equal seat at the table. We strongly support a level-playing field for all potential candidates, incumbent or challenger

## ***2010 Policy Priorities***

Fix the antiquated Senate rules that allow for the abuse of the filibuster

Establish a strong system to publicly finance elections

Institute a ban on electronic voting machines without a voter-verifiable paper ballot, used for at least a sample mini-audit of the accuracy of the machine counts

Support a Constitutional Amendment to ban corporate personhood, as well as immediate legislation to stop the effects until the Amendment can be passed



## **Health Care**

### **Our Values**

Quality health care is a basic human right.

A national single-payer health care plan is the best method to control costs, ensuring access to affordable prescriptions and deliver the highest quality of care

Health care decisions should be made by the patient and their health care professionals

We support regulations of prescription drugs that reduce cost and are based on scientifically-sound research.

It is essential that our health care system treat all patients equally, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or economic status

### **2010 Policy Priorities**

Institute a strong public option here in Washington State as a stepping stone on our way to a national single payer system

Fully fund comprehensive family planning

Prohibit Advertising of Prescription Drugs in media

Protect the law in Washington State regarding medical marijuana

## **Human, Civil and Constitutional Rights**

### **Our Values**

Respect the equality and dignity of all people and affirm all human rights as guaranteed by the US Constitution and written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We honor the rich diversity of society and our party.

Support complete equality and seek to end all discrimination based upon age, color, creed, disability, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, and sexual orientation.

Support the right to observe any or no religion. We honor all forms of religious and spiritual diversity. We adamantly support our American tradition of separation of church and state at all levels of government.



Support the right of women to make reproductive and medical choices without criminal repercussions to women or medical professionals, the right of people to be provided with contraception and medically accurate, comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education

Endorse the right of adults to form unions/families of their choosing and oppose definition of marriage by all levels of government

### ***2010 Policy Priorities***

Repeal the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Law, the Defense of Marriage Act and pass an inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act

Create viable Washington State definition of "disability" based on the Federal Americans with Disability Act (ADA)

Pass the Equal Rights Amendment

## **Immigration**

### **Our Values**

All people are entitled to human rights and dignity regardless of country of origin or lack of documentation.

Immigration is an issue of global displacement and disproportionate distribution of wealth – not of Homeland Security. We require that the causal relationship between foreign and trade policy and the increase in undocumented immigration be addressed in all immigration legislation without further criminalizing or stigmatizing immigrants.

### ***2010 Policy Priorities***

Establish a guest worker program to allow migrant workers to legally work in the US without violating immigration law

End deportation or detention, without due process of law, of any person that is a primary or sole caregiver for a minor child or disabled dependent regardless of citizenship status

Streamline and expedite legalization for immigrants fleeing from area of war, genocide, and political oppression

Create a path to citizenship for undocumented people already residing within the United States



Reintroduction and passage of the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act, which allows children of undocumented immigrants temporary residency to allow them to pursue higher education

## **Tribal Sovereignty and Relationships**

### **Our Values**

Local, state, and federal governments should respect decisions of the Native American Nations and tribal governments, affirm their treaty rights, and oppose attempts to diminish their sovereignty and cultures.

### ***2010 Policy Priorities***

Local, state, and federal government recognition of the inherent sovereignty and treaty rights of American Indian tribal governments as self-determining and self-governing

National recognition of tribal lands that extend over the U.S./Mexico and US/Canadian border and the freedom of members of such sovereign nations to move within their lands without obstruction

Local, state, and federal governments to help elevate the social, economic, and health status of American Indian people and tribes to a level at par with the status of other US and State of Washington citizens