

DPW 2006 Platform

Preamble

The Democratic Party of Wisconsin strives to build a strong, just and open society where all citizens are respectful of one another and have equal opportunities to live meaningful, secure lives. We work actively for open and honest government that is responsive and accountable to the needs and the will of the people.

Justice, Human Concerns, and Democracy

Our government must support values common to all people, which include freedom, family, fairness, responsibility, and community.

One of the primary jobs of government is to ensure that everyone can lead dignified, healthy, and fulfilling lives. We value love, commitment, stability and nurturing of all family members. Our Constitution guarantees that we are all equal regardless of race, color, religion, actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, age, occupation, national origin, physical disabilities or appearance, or political beliefs. We fight to ensure that these basic civil liberties are forever preserved.

The federal and the state Constitutions, as originally drafted, were intended to grant rights to individuals. These documents were never intended to impose restrictions on citizens. We are adamantly opposed to amending either Constitution in a way that limits the rights of any citizens. Any freedom lost due to government restrictions imposed on any of us, violates and endangers all of us.

It is vital that government respect, support, and protect freedom of expression in our democracy. When government attempts to limit the rights of its citizens, the fundamental philosophy on which our nation was established is destroyed. We oppose legislation that would try to limit, or take away, any of our civil liberties. No branch of government has the right to unilaterally take away our civil rights. No branch of government is above the law. We must maintain checks and balances among the three branches of government.

Government must protect the constitutional rights of citizens while effectively reducing crime and fighting terrorism. Adequate funding is necessary for law enforcement and emergency response activities. These men and women are a community's first line of defense. The defense of our country should never be dependent on most of our resources fighting foreign wars, but rather primarily be focused on guarding the gates here at home. Security cannot be achieved if we turn over our ports or cargo inspection to foreign governments. Neither can it be achieved if the resources of our National Guard and Homeland Security are not available or properly deployed to respond to natural disasters, which have destructive power greater than any act of terrorism. Security cannot be achieved by bankrupting us with endless wars.

1 We are committed to the idea of fairness and will work to ensure that everyone has an
2 equal opportunity to succeed, an equal voice in government, and fair and equal
3 treatment under the law. Fairness requires that governments are responsible and
4 accountable to people. We recognize that minorities often face unreasonable
5 challenges. We pursue legislation and cultural change that will end racial and ethnic
6 profiling, respects the sovereignty of Native American nations, and ensures equality
7 between men and women. We shall work for gender-balanced, qualified representation
8 at all levels of government in order to eliminate inequities and improve governmental
9 decision-making and problem solving. Equal opportunities that lead to widespread
10 prosperity help to assure freedom and security.

11
12 Increased empowerment of citizens in all civic affairs makes our nation a true
13 democracy. The government must be an open institution that people trust. The
14 government must comply with open meeting and public record laws, enact legislation
15 for full public funding for all state and national elections, while ensuring that every
16 citizen has a guaranteed right and equal access to vote. We have the right to inspect
17 and count votes and have a paper ballot to insure voting accountability.

18
19 We respect the rights of all people to their religious beliefs and welcome all citizens into
20 the Democratic Party regardless of their beliefs. It is vital that we observe a strict
21 separation between government and religion. It remains the right of citizens to choose
22 their own religious and philosophical beliefs rather than the government imposing any
23 upon them.

24
25 We must develop a fair immigration policy providing a reasonable and legal path to
26 residency and citizenship and a fair opportunity for current undocumented residents to
27 achieve legal status. All people should be afforded the same basic principles of life,
28 liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

29
30 It is important to care for all generations. We need affordable, quality, licensed daycare
31 centers and government support to pay for childcare. We cannot afford to neglect our
32 nation's future leaders. We need health education and disease prevention programs
33 concerning smoking, alcohol, and sexually transmitted infections. By making people
34 aware of high-risk behaviors, they will be better able to adequately care for themselves.

35
36 Rather than abandoning our older generation, it is essential that we preserve Social
37 Security. Privatizing Social Security threatens the financial security of those who are
38 most vulnerable. It is important that we enhance programs for the aging and disabled,
39 including subsidized long term in-home or nursing home care.

40
41 We firmly believe access to affordable health care is a national right and that the best
42 solution to our national health care crisis is a single-payer system that provides
43 universal access, promotes preventive measures, and covers all physical and mental
44 illnesses equally. Until that necessary system is made available, we support broader
45 coverage and increased funding for the current health care programs on local, state and
46 national levels, such as BadgerCare and Medicaid.

47
48 Personal moral, religious, and medical decisions should be left up to the individual. We

1 believe in complete freedom of reproductive choice, as well as the individual's right to
2 choose death with dignity. Everyone has the right to obtain medications, prescribed by
3 their physician, from any licensed pharmacy in a timely manner. It is neither the role of
4 the pharmacist nor the government to interfere in the private, personal decisions of its
5 citizens. Funding for stem cell research should not be influenced by religious beliefs,
6 but this research, which would benefit all of mankind, should be supported on its
7 scientific merits.

8
9 We oppose the death penalty as an inhumane and ineffective means of punishment.
10 We believe in equitable sentencing standards and increasing the authority of duly
11 elected judges to modify sentences. Further, minor marijuana offenses should be
12 processed as local ordinance violations.

13
14 We support reasonable firearms regulations to ensure the safety of citizens and law
15 enforcement officials. We support the right to hunt and bear arms. We support safety
16 measures and Wisconsin's concealed carry ban.

17
18 We advocate strengthening consumer protection laws and returning enforcement
19 authority to the Wisconsin Department of Justice. We support accurate,
20 understandable labeling of food and medicinal products.

21 22 23 **Education, Labor, and Economics**

24
25 Quality public education for all is critical for a healthy democracy. Any form of public
26 funding for private schools diverts resources from and adversely impacts public schools.
27 Increased governmental funding is essential for all levels of public education, from early
28 childhood programs to programs providing financial aid for attendance at UW and
29 Technical College Systems. No child should be denied a quality education because of a
30 lack of financial resources.

31
32 We believe that students have the right to receive their education in a safe, respectful,
33 and nurturing environment, free from harassment or discrimination by teachers, staff,
34 parents, or other students. A strong public education system in Wisconsin prepares our
35 youth to be the next generation of leaders.

36
37 Wisconsin's educational funding system has failed. The law allowing a limited qualified
38 economic offer (QEO) has caused decreasing compensation for teachers.

39
40 Teacher compensation should keep pace with the costs of benefits and inflation. Public
41 school teachers must not be taken for granted. They deserve tremendous respect for
42 their work educating our youth under challenging circumstances.

43
44 A strong and secure nation depends on sound economic policy including meaningful full
45 employment. Business, labor, and the public must work together to re-establish
46 American jobs on American soil and resist outsourcing, thus reinvigorating domestic
47 industries. With a strong economy including high employment and fair wages that
48 provide stable housing and encourage strong family units for all families, we can have

1 functional communities, a properly educated workforce, and a tax base that can pay for
2 the infrastructure needed to keep our communities safe and secure.

3
4 We believe workers have rights to safe and equitable workplaces, living wages, and
5 secure benefits. They must be guaranteed the right to organize, bargain collectively,
6 and strike in order to secure those rights, without fear of reprisal. We support public
7 employee's rights to speedy mediation and binding arbitration of labor disputes. In
8 addition, businesses must be held accountable for contracts with its employees. We
9 oppose right-to-walk legislation. Hiring strikebreakers must be prohibited. Pension
10 funds must be regulated in order to be responsibly managed and strictly safeguarded.
11 In the event of bankruptcy, workers are entitled to the first claim on remaining assets.

12
13 In addition, it is crucial that we support a tax system that is based on ability to pay. It
14 is immoral to increase the tax burden on the lower and middle classes by cutting taxes
15 for the wealthiest among us. This fails to spur economic and job development, and
16 hurts those who have the least income. Furthermore, we must balance the Federal
17 budget through wise spending and fair taxation. We believe this generation should be
18 responsible for paying its own debts rather than saddling future generations with the
19 consequences of irresponsible budget practices.

20
21 America must invest in a healthy economic future by funding basic research and worker
22 training. American companies have a duty to our nation to be established here at
23 home, follow our environmental and labor laws, and pay taxes. Furthermore, we must
24 protect our industries from competition by enforcing tariffs against nations that tolerate
25 unfair worker conditions.

26
27 Our wealth should be measured not only by the GDP but also by broad measures of
28 well being, such as the United Nations Human Development Index, that incorporate
29 factors like health, education, literacy, employment and wages, and environmental
30 quality.

31 32 33 **Agriculture and Environment**

34
35 Wisconsin is, and always will be, America's Dairyland. We must preserve family farming
36 by creating market systems that assure a fair return to both the farmer and the
37 processor, support value added agriculture, and provide price supports for true family
38 farms. We encourage legislators and Democratic Party leaders to support farming
39 management systems that are humane to animals, protect our environment, preserve
40 our soil, water and forest resources, and produce wholesome food for consumers. We
41 advocate place of origin and organically produced foods labeling.

42
43 We support affordable quality health care, public education and social services for all
44 citizens in rural Wisconsin. Excessive development of corporate animal mega-farms is
45 detrimental to the health and quality of life in rural areas and must be controlled.

46
47 Protecting the ecological systems of our planet is essential to the economic and social
48 welfare of our state, our nation and to the future of humanity. Our legislators and

1 leaders must pay heed to scientific evidence of global warming; soil, water, and
2 atmospheric pollution; and decreasing biodiversity. We must enact legislation and
3 provide adequate funding to protect and preserve our environment.
4

5 There is much to be done that has been ignored for too long. We must reduce
6 greenhouse gases by developing alternative fuels and energy sources, increase
7 production of fuel efficient vehicles, reduce urban sprawl onto prime agricultural soils,
8 improve and expand local, regional, and national mass transportation systems and
9 increase recycling and waste management, all while maintaining biodiversity. We will
10 restore responsible environmental regulations affecting open space, wilderness areas,
11 soil conservation, forest management, toxic and hazardous waste disposal and cleanup,
12 and watershed protection. We call for the use of advanced technology and
13 environmentally friendly practices to be implemented in mining domestic natural
14 resources, and the enforcement and strengthening of safety regulations. To ensure the
15 protection of our state's valuable natural resources, we support the re-establishment of
16 a Public Intervener's Office and the creation of an independent Department of Natural
17 Resources.
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19

20 **Foreign Affairs**

21
22 Our nation must seek to befriend others and encourage the growth of democracy
23 worldwide. We must address the grievances and problems that foster terrorism, rather
24 than fight wars that perpetuate them. America must work with other nations to end
25 hunger, disease, illiteracy, and unemployment around the world. As the world's only
26 remaining superpower, we have an obligation to lead by example rather than by force.
27 We pledge the United States to be a cooperative and effective leader and partner with
28 allied nations in the fight against terrorism and the pursuit of global accords on human
29 rights, economic justice, ecological protection and alleviation of disease.
30

31 We respect the religions of other cultures and will not use religious beliefs as a rationale
32 for going to war. A pre-emptive war is against our nation's principles and harms our
33 credibility and standing in the world. A decision to go to war should always be
34 thoughtful and considerate of different points of view. War must always be a last
35 resort. All branches of our Government and military must conform to the Geneva
36 Conventions and not tolerate the use of torture.
37

38 We must do everything possible to prevent our enemies from attacking us, but we
39 believe that this can be done without sacrificing the civil rights guaranteed under the
40 Constitution. Therefore, we call upon Congress to begin impeachment proceedings
41 immediately against President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Defense Secretary
42 Rumsfeld.
43

44 We call for American occupation forces in Iraq to be withdrawn at the earliest possible
45 time. Multi-lateral reconstruction of Iraq can be achieved with American participation
46 and international participation so that the Iraqi people can freely and peacefully
47 determine their own future.
48

1 All countries that we trade with must offer wages, benefits and work and environmental
2 standards comparable to our own, because it is the right thing to do, and should be
3 done in order to protect the rights and jobs of workers here at home. We do not
4 support fast track trade authority in order to enrich corporations at the expense of
5 American families and the financial stability and security of our nation.

6
7 We support working with nations and organizations that support fair trade. Fair trade is
8 vital in providing all people with the opportunity to work at occupations that provide a
9 fair living wage, health benefits, safe working conditions, and the right to collective
10 bargaining, while enforcing environmentally friendly policies. We support cooperative
11 efforts to eliminate global pollution and mitigate the effects of global warming.

12
13

14 **Conclusion**

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16 The membership of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin has crafted and adopted this
17 platform. Our state and our country will become stronger and better by following the
18 principles, in line with our values, outlined herein. We expect all candidates supported
19 by the Democratic Party to support this Platform and, when elected to office, to work to
20 implement it.