

KANSAS DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM

Statement of Principles

Kansas Democrats believe government is at its best when it operates in the spirit of cooperation and compromise, rather than partisanship and enmity. We believe what brings us together is far stronger than what might pull us apart. We seek to protect the freedom of the individual, while working together to actively contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of our communities.

We believe that government has a responsibility to promote policies that provide economic and social justice, a clean environment and safe workplaces. In short, we believe that government has a responsibility to improve the human condition.

Kansas Democrats are committed to putting the people of Kansas first by promoting the values and policies that advance the common good for all Kansans, through:

- sensible leadership and sound, pragmatic decision-making;
- fairness in our policies;
- investments in our children, our families, and our communities;
- expanded opportunities for every resident of our state.

Our core values call on all Kansans to work together to make our state an outstanding place to live, work, and raise a family.

Kansas Democrats believe that, to express the democratic will of the people of Kansas, our government should encourage, enable, and facilitate the active participation in the political process of all people regardless of their race, color, age, physical abilities, economic status, religion, creed, sex, national origin, ethnicity, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

The Kansas Democratic Party asks the people of Kansas to examine our traditions of leadership, of upholding of core Kansas values, and of promoting expanded opportunities for every Kansan, and to then join us in moving our state forward to an even brighter tomorrow.

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Strengthening Public Education

Education is a core value of Kansans; therefore, investing in public education at all levels has been, and always will be, a top priority of Kansas Democrats. The success of our children and our communities depends on quality schools with educators who have successfully completed teacher education programs and are licensed through the Kansas Department of Education. A quality education depends on attracting and retaining quality teachers. The success of our economy depends on a well-educated and well-trained workforce.

Therefore, Kansas Democrats support full funding for public education as required by the Kansas Constitution; an end to tax breaks for corporations that fund scholarship money that goes to private schools; and reinstating due process for public school teachers.

Prosperity and job creation in the 21st century depend on funding quality public schools, vocational training, community colleges and universities in Kansas. There is no higher priority for our tax dollars, and there is no greater commitment for Kansas Democrats.

Kansas Democrats believe that education policy should include early childhood education through post-secondary, including trade & technical education.

Creating Kansas Jobs and Growing the Kansas Economy

Without good jobs, many Kansas families would be unable to contribute to their communities and take advantage of all the opportunities life in our state has to offer. As such, Kansas Democrats are unwavering in their efforts to encourage the creation of new, good-paying jobs to our state and building a strong economy so that every family may benefit.

Economic Development

Kansas Democrats support creating new Kansas jobs through investment in research and new technologies. We will seek to form partnerships with businesses – encouraging the private sector to create good jobs here in Kansas and helping businesses that play by the rules to succeed.

We continue to believe new opportunities in fields as diverse as bio-science research and energy efficiency hold great promise for our state's workers. We will continue to lead efforts to encourage the development of STEM industries in our state as well as strengthen our existing industries, including agriculture, aviation, bio-science, manufacturing, oil & gas, and wind energy.

Kansas Democrats support measures to aid in the development of small business.

Kansas Democrats recognize farming and ranching as important parts of the state economy.

Immigration

Kansas Democrats continue to welcome immigrants and recognize they benefit our state in important ways. Immigrants have helped create, transform, and revive Kansas communities, helping to reverse the long decline many rural areas are experiencing.

Quality of Life for Kansans

Kansas Democrats believe government should provide robust funding for the arts in our communities to enhance our education, culture, and quality of life and also benefit our economy.

Kansas Democrats believe all Kansans have a right to be safe in their homes, schools, offices, places of worship, and communities. We recognize our safety is due to the hard work and sacrifice of law enforcement officers, social workers, educators, and others involved in overseeing the safety of others. We thank them for their service.

Infrastructure

Kansas Democrats recognize our economy and thousands of jobs depend on maintaining good quality infrastructure, particularly for our communication and transportation networks.

Business investment will tend to follow communications infrastructure, resulting in job growth and entrepreneurial creativity. Distance learning and telemedicine will continue to be important, especially to rural Kansas communities.

Government operations can be made both more cost-effective and more convenient through greater online access.

We support the completion of the T-Link Transportation Plan and oppose the practice of raiding the Highway Fund to make up budgetary shortfalls.

Protecting Kansas Workers

Kansas Democrats strongly support efforts to protect Kansas workers. We believe every worker should be paid a living wage, by paying the prevailing wage on state and local construction projects and other initiatives to pay workers a living wage.

Full-time employees should not have to rely on public assistance to survive.

Kansas Democrats support organized labor and the rights of all workers, including public sector workers, to organize into unions and collectively bargain and negotiate for a living wage.

Kansas Democrats believe all workers are entitled to a safe workplace. When workers are injured, we believe they should receive fair and equitable treatment and compensation. Kansas Democrats support unemployment insurance that is adequately funded and provides income stability to workers laid off due to no fault of their own.

Kansas Democrats recognize the value of our public employees and will continue to support market-based compensation for state employees. We support strengthened funding for the Kansas Public Employee Retirement System.

Kansas Democrats support increasing the minimum wage to be a living wage and also support laws that require equal pay for persons who perform the same work.

Keeping Kansans Healthy

The health of our citizens is important to the health of our state. Children will only reach their full potential with a healthy start in life; all Kansans can benefit from good nutrition, physical activity, and health care services throughout our lives.

Kansas Democrats believe that every Kansan should have social and physical environments that promote good health and access to high quality affordable health care from birth until death.

Many of the health initiatives Kansas Democrats have supported in the past have been addressed with the passage of the Affordable Care and Patient Protection Act. We recognize the benefits of this law to Kansans and support its provisions to:

- promote wellness and preventive care;
- provide insurance coverage for children up to age 26 on their family's insurance;

- make coverage portable between employers without concern for preexisting conditions;
- lower premiums;
- expand coverage for uninsured Kansans; and
- protect the privacy of Medical Records.

However, certain provisions that make the ACA workable have not been enacted in Kansas—notably the expansion of Medicaid coverage to thousands of eligible persons. Kansas Democrats will work to expand Medicaid coverage in Kansas.

Kansas Democrats support full mental health coverage. In addition, we are committed to maintaining our community mental health services.

Privatization of health care services should be closely monitored to ensure they meet acceptable standards of care, make timely payments to providers, and uphold the best possible continuum of care for vulnerable Kansans.

Kansas Democrats support the right of individuals to make health care choices to receive medical procedures and treatments after consulting with his/her health care provider.

Kansas Democrats support the Living Donor Protection Act.

Kansas Democrats support the availability of marijuana for medical use and protection of patients from criminal arrest and prosecution.

Kansas Democrats support access to affordable family planning services and will continue to oppose efforts to defund family planning health centers.

Kansas Democrats support evidence-based and age-appropriate sex education.

Kansas Democrats believe that women have a right to control their reproductive choices including a woman's right to make decisions regarding contraception and pregnancy, including the option of terminating a pregnancy safely and legally consistent with the Constitution of the United States. We oppose efforts to weaken or undermine that right.

We support a woman's decision to have a child by providing affordable health care and ensuring the availability of and access to programs that help women during pregnancy and after the birth of a child, including caring adoption programs.

Upholding Ethics in Government and Elections

Voting

Kansas Democrats believe voting is a right, not a privilege, for all citizens. Voting is also a duty. Impediments to the exercise of that right and the practice of that

duty are deplorable. The sanctity and security of elections in Kansas must be protected from partisan, ideological and personal motives.

In recent years the Kansas Legislature and Secretary of State have enacted laws that make it more difficult and, in some cases, impossible for eligible Kansans to vote. These include voter identification laws and a requirement that new voters prove their American citizenship before registering to vote. Kansas Democrats oppose such laws and any laws that create dual-tiered voting for state and federal elections. Instead, we support laws that make it easier for all eligible Kansans to register or vote, including easy access to early voting and being able to register to vote with driver license applications.

Kansas Democrats believe every eligible vote should be counted.

We believe the Secretary of State, election commissioners, and county clerks should run elections in a fair, impartial, and non-partisan manner and should not form a PAC that contributes to any candidate.

Kansas Democrats support a prohibition on the Secretary of State of Kansas being employed by any other state or holding any political party office while serving as the guardian of fair and open elections here in Kansas.

Kansas Democrats call for the initiation, promotion, and adoption of a statewide mail ballot for every registered voter at every election.

Transparency in Campaigns

Public trust in our democracy requires that the actions of our elected officials are guided by the public good. Kansas Democrats believe ethics in campaigning and government are absolute principles to which our candidates and public officials must adhere.

We support continued scrutiny of state campaign and governmental ethics laws in an effort to clearly define acceptable and unacceptable conduct and close existing loopholes. We support full disclosure of all independent expenditures made on behalf of all political and issue campaigns.

Protecting our Natural Resources and Environment

The health of Kansans is intertwined with the quality of our water, air, and soil. Kansas Democrats believe incentives should be offered to assist farmers, industries, and municipalities as they adopt more environmentally-friendly practices. We support environmental policies and long range planning that will enhance, rather than diminish, the natural assets we pass on to our children and grandchildren.

Water and Soil

We assign a high priority to cleaning up our rivers and streams, reducing the pollutants in the air, protecting ground water from depletion and pollutants, preserving biodiversity and wildlife habitat, and addressing climate change.

The depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer and other water sources as well as the silting of Kansas reservoirs are critical problems for the future development in Kansas. Kansas needs a long-term strategy for coming to grips with this problem of resource depletion. We support the development of the 50 year vision for water in Kansas to protect our shrinking water resource which includes educating the public on water conservation.

The fertile soils of Kansas farms must be protected and conserved. This is best accomplished by research, education, and keeping the land in the hands of family farmers.

Energy

Kansans must protect the environment while pursuing energy sources, utilize renewable energy resources when available, and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels. The environmental impact must be considered when exploring for oil or natural gas.

Kansas Democrats support measures to increase energy efficiency. We support the development of economically and environmentally sustainable clean energy resources and a long-term commitment to the development of a renewable energy economy, based on the production of power from wind, water, sun and bio-fuel.

Kansas Democrats support the requirement that power companies generate a certain percentage of their energy via renewable sources. We oppose any effort to repeal this requirement.

We believe that energy efficiency and economic growth go hand in hand. We will make our economy more efficient by reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, producing less waste, and using less energy.

Climate Change

Kansas Democrats acknowledge human activities are contributing to unprecedented changes in the climate of our planet. This climate change poses a very real danger to our state's residents and economy. Kansas Democrats support action to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, both through the use of alternative fuels and increased energy conservation and efficiency.

Fiscal Responsibility, Equity and Tax Fairness, Transparency in Government

Kansas' fiscal condition is dire. Fiscal analysts have projected deficits approaching a billion dollars by 2018 because of the loss of revenue from income

tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthiest people and businesses in the state. Bond ratings have been downgraded because of budgets where spending exceeds revenues. Property taxes have increased by more than 10% in 71 of 105 counties and in total over \$300 million during the Brownback administration. The current tax regime shifts the tax burden more to the middle class via higher sales and property taxes in order to replace revenue lost from 2012 income tax cuts.

Kansas Democrats oppose this tax shift and favor restoration of the “three-legged stool” concept of having a balance among income, sales, and property taxes. This balanced approach to taxation has protected the state during economic downturns, and has provided sufficient revenue for decades to fund education suitably and to meet the other primary needs of the state.

Kansas Democrats call on the next governor and legislature to stop any further income tax cuts which by law will occur in 2015 and beyond.

Kansas Democrats call on the next governor to create a bipartisan tax commission, as other governors have done, to review our state’s tax structure to make sure it is fair and represents Kansas values. Kansas Democrats will continue to fight to make sure that no single sector of our economy or group of our citizens bears a disproportionate share of our tax burden.

Kansas Democrats support the establishment and protection of the budgetary rainy day fund so we can survive the next economic downturn. Regaining Kansas’ top credit rating through prudent tax and fiscal policies should be a priority for the next governor and Kansas Legislature.

Kansas Democrats believe that refusing to accept federal money hurts Kansans. Kansans pay into the federal budget with our taxes and should get our share back to spend in Kansas and help the Kansas economy.

Transparency and Efficiency in Government

Kansans deserve an efficient, responsive, and transparent government.

Kansans support the appointment of state officials who are knowledgeable in their area of work. Minimum competency requirements **for** appointed officials should be a requirement for confirmation.

Kansas Democrats support the Home Rule rights of municipalities and counties.

Children and Families

The policies of the last four years have caused a rise in child poverty, hunger among school children, and homelessness. Social service mechanisms and rules have been dismantled, changed or discarded. Changes in SNAP benefit rules have resulted in many people being disqualified. Needs are increasing while

funding is decreasing. The next governor will have much work to do to return to a set of policies that support all Kansas children and families being allowed access to basic necessities of food, shelter, and protection from harm. Kansas Democrats support adequate funding of social service programs that will:

- reduce child poverty;
- reduce the number of children being placed in foster care;
- address hunger among school children;
- support homeless shelters and programs to end homelessness; and
- provide assistance for single persons as well as families with children including SNAP benefits and transitional assistance.

Kansas Democrats will continue to lead on the issues of pre- and post-natal care, safe and affordable child care, after-school programs, child immunizations, enforcement for child support payments, and criminal penalties for those who perpetrate domestic violence and sexual assault.

Kansas Democrats oppose human trafficking in all its forms and support efforts to combat human trafficking. We support services for victims and survivors of human trafficking as well as preventative measures aimed at those most at risk of being trafficked.

Kansas Democrats believe people with disabilities deserve respect and dignity. We also recognize that persons with disabilities have abilities. We support disabled Kansans having access to long-term services that support and promote independent living in the most integrated setting possible.

Kansas Democrats believe in ensuring an economic safety net for all families. We support the services needed to help families regain their independence while monitoring programs to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse.

Honoring Senior Citizens

Kansas Democrats recognize the tremendous contributions of senior citizens. We support initiatives aimed at helping them maintain their independence and live their lives with dignity. We supported the recent increase in the personal needs allowances of Medicaid recipients in adult care homes.

Kansas Democrats advocate vigorous enforcement of licensing standards for adult care homes and oppose any form of age discrimination. We advocate uniform application of Medicare regulations and enhanced state and local support of public home-health and hospice services. We support services including adult daycare, home delivered meals, and community senior centers.

We soundly reject the Health Care Compact legislation enacted in 2014 especially because it would bring Medicare under state control. Kansas

Democrats vigorously oppose such a measure because the health care upon which our senior citizens depend could be jeopardized.

Honoring our Military and Veterans' Service to Protect our Freedoms

Just as we support law enforcement officers, Kansas Democrats also support the men and women of our Kansas National Guard and armed forces as they defend our state and nation. Kansas Democrats led the way in the creation of a Military Bill of Rights to help ease the financial burden of military service. Kansas Democrats pledge to always stand with military personnel, veterans, and their families as they serve as well as when they return home. We support additional help for Kansas veterans as a way to honor their service to our nation.

Kansas Democrats recognize the role both of these groups play in our homeland security efforts. We strongly support providing these brave men and women with the tools, training, and support they need to defend our state from man-made and natural threats.

Kansas Democrats support efforts to increase veterans' access to health care in their local communities.

Kansas Democrats support our national defense and the continued presence of all US Military bases located in Kansas.

Supporting Rural Communities and Family Agriculture

Kansas Democrats recognize the value of vibrant rural communities. Yet many rural areas of our state face real challenges. That is why we believe we must do even more to address these challenges and restore opportunity to rural Kansas.

A vibrant, economically healthy rural community depends on public schools, places of worship, family farms, hospitals, and other health care facilities. Kansas Democrats support:

- continued expansion of broadband internet access to maintain and improve the quality of education available in rural schools;
- developing regional networks of health care which, through expanded technology, can provide much needed support for rural hospitals; and
- expanding Medicaid will greatly benefit rural hospitals and communities.
- SNAP benefits that are critical for supporting children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities in our cities and our rural communities;
- new technology that has the potential to create new industries and jobs in rural areas. Renewable energy production including wind, water, solar and bio-fuel, has the potential can revitalize rural communities, bringing jobs and prosperity while at the same time benefiting our environment. Kansas Democrats will continue to lead the way in efforts to expand these industries in Kansas;

- creating a formal Kansas Housing Finance Agency structure so that rural Kansans, receives homebuyer financing. Kansas is the only state in the nation without a Housing Finance Agency and as a result the programs and funds serve primarily metro/urban counties;
- a diverse family agriculture that is profitable and sustainable, delivering healthy foods to hungry people. We support family farms by enhancing and expanding markets for our agricultural products along with technical and processing support for local food production; and
- promotion of crops that require less water, such as cotton and industrial hemp, and new crop varieties such as perennial wheat.

Promoting Equal Rights, Human Dignity and Diversity

Kansas Democrats believe in equal treatment under the law for every Kansan regardless of race, color, age, physical abilities, economic status, religion, creed, sex, national origin, ethnicity, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Kansas Democrats support cultural, linguistic, ethnic, sexual identity, religious, and spiritual diversity as personal freedoms which demand protection under the law.

Kansas Democrats uphold and support the separation of church and state principle as codified in the Kansas and United States Constitutions which protects Kansans from sectarian divisions, and allows for full religious freedom without the assistance or promotion of the government.

Religion is a private matter, separate from the state, and must not be used to shape public policy affecting all Kansans who hold a myriad of beliefs and philosophies. Religious freedom in Kansas is jeopardized when the state and public officials propagate legislation to promote religious doctrines within public policy.

Kansas Democrats strongly reject any attempts by government officials in Kansas to establish a religious state through legislative or policy directives. Freedom of conscience belongs to all the citizens of Kansas, and must be protected to ensure a free, democratic society.

Religious liberty shall not be misconstrued as a license to discriminate or otherwise violate the law.

Kansas Democrats support marriage equality.

We support the passage of hate crime legislation to protect equal rights, and we oppose any form of racial or ethnic profiling. We oppose “show me your papers” legislation.

Kansas Democrats believe the death penalty is costly, subject to error, and discriminatory on its application. Therefore, we believe the death penalty in Kansas should be abolished.

We support remedies to prevent job discrimination, including pay equity. We oppose any form of racial or ethnic profiling and support legislation that law enforcement officers and law enforcement vehicles be equipped with cameras and the use of cameras be required.

Kansas Democrats stand for the dignity of victims of rape and sexual abuse.

We recognize the valuable contribution youth make to our state and we support giving young people a voice, encouraging and assisting youth participation in every aspect of political action.

Summation

Kansas Democrats believe in working with all persons dedicated to improving the life and well-being of Kansans. In 2014, after four years of fierce partisanship and ideologically-based leadership, coming together to advance the common good is essential to restoring Kansas mainstream values to our government. In this way, Kansas will again become a state whose programs and principles support all Kansans.