

2022 Platform of the Democratic Party of Benton County

Adopted by the Benton County Democratic Central Committee February 17, 2022



Preamble

We believe that American governments, including the government of the State of Oregon and local governments within Benton County, should uphold and further the ideals laid down by the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and should better people's lives by working in the common interest. The Democratic Party of Benton County is committed to building a Free, Just, Prosperous, Responsible, Secure, and Enduring society for the present generation and for those to come. The Democratic Party of Benton County, as a part of the Democratic Party of Oregon and as an independent entity, further commit to fighting for equality, equity, and human rights for all residents of our county, our state, and our country.

This platform is a guide to the principles and positions by which we intend to fulfill that commitment. We endorse the Platform of the Democratic Party of Oregon and refer to that for issues not addressed in this document. We recognize our rights and responsibilities as citizens of our local communities, our state, our nation, and the global community.

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I. Education

1. We support a science-based curriculum.
2. We believe that Oregon's schools should make a commitment to address persistent economic, social, and ethnic disparities in educational outcomes, including a commitment to English Language Learners and dual-language immersion education models.
3. We believe that education resources should be applied where need is the greatest, which may result in increased appropriation for schools based on race, income, or other social factors.
4. We believe that all educational programs must be safe, open, and welcoming to all, regardless of sexual orientations and gender identity.
5. We support the concept of wrap-around services to provide students with support such as: mentoring, after-school programs, and other programs that have proven effective. Each child should have an authentic and nurturing relationship with at least one adult in their lives.
6. We believe well-being is inextricably connected with a student's success. We support full funding for comprehensive in-school nutrition programs, robust collaboration and support of families experiencing homelessness, mental health and guidance counseling, fostering an active lifestyle, and in-school delivery of health services.
7. We support free public education, and we believe every Oregon student should have the opportunity to attend publicly funded college, university, or a vocational program tuition-free. We believe in reducing and/or eliminating existing student loan debt and eliminating predatory student loan practices.
8. We believe that developmentally appropriate, play-based, culturally sensitive opportunities for young children should be high educational priorities.
9. We support a whole-child approach to education that encourages students to acquire general knowledge and become accomplished at respecting others, thinking critically, working collaboratively and creatively, and acting in ways that are fair and just. This includes providing culturally responsive curriculum, restorative practices, and teaching accurately the history of racial discrimination.
10. We believe curriculum-based community service learning and place-based education builds a sense of personal efficacy and empowerment and provides opportunities for children to see themselves as leaders and activists, and should be high educational priorities.
11. We recognize that standardized summative assessments are a measure of effectiveness of education systems and support multiple assessment strategies to determine student success. We recognize that a student's teacher should work collaboratively with the student, the student's family, and other providers in evaluating educational performance.
12. We support having professionally licensed teachers who reflect Oregon's demographics in the classroom. Since teacher efficacy is the strongest single predictor of student outcomes, we support new teacher mentoring and robust professional development for all teachers.
13. We support fair and broad-based evaluation of educator effectiveness by educators, endorse the collaborative evaluation of administrators, and encourage that such measures recognize excellence and ongoing improvement.
14. We support the rights of educational professionals to freely and collectively negotiate instructional and educational issues that enhance opportunities for student learning as well as working conditions, wages, benefits, and employment stability.
15. We support local control of our public schools that is transparent and accountable to the electorate. Funding for public schools should be appropriated in a budgeting process that is subject to oversight and provides opportunity for public input.

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II. Healthcare

1. We believe healthcare is a human right. We believe that everyone deserves timely access to healthcare. It is the responsibility of a just society.
2. We support the adoption of an equitable, affordable, high-quality, comprehensive universal health care system that includes general, preventive, and emergency care plus vision, dental, hearing, and mental health services, and pharmaceuticals at the state or federal level.
3. We believe in parity of mental health care with physical and surgical benefits. We support comprehensive, stable, and easily accessible mental health services to address the immediate needs of individuals up to and including inpatient and residential care when needed, regardless of patient circumstances.
4. We believe in protecting the vulnerable from neglect and abuse, especially children, the medically fragile, people with disabilities, and the elderly.
5. We strongly support women's right to reproductive health equity. We support high-quality, culturally sensitive care, the full range of reproductive services, contraception, and abortion, without requiring guardian, judicial, parental, or spousal consent or notification. These highly personal healthcare decisions are the woman's and the woman's alone to make.
6. We support post-partum care and intervention for post-partum depression.
7. We support the right for everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, and the full funding of all nutrition programs.
8. We believe in ensuring economic and physical access to multilingual services (such as health care) and that we must address healthcare disparities and promote the goals of the Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health.
9. We strongly support authorizing state and federal governments to negotiate drug prices with transparency and to include pharmaceuticals from outside the United States.

III. Basic Needs

1. We support the right of all Oregonians to access the basic necessities of life such as food, water, health care, sleep, and shelter.
2. We believe all consenting adult couples should have the equal and unequivocal right to civil marriage. We further believe that Oregon's LGBTQ+ community deserves to live without the fear of violence, employment discrimination, disproportionate risks of poverty, or gaps in health care.
3. We believe in the right of every Oregonian to safe, healthy, and affordable housing and shelter. We support actions to address the epidemic of displacement from housing within our local communities and across the state.
4. We believe an educated and enlightened citizenry is essential to a democratic society. As such, we believe that our news media must be free to investigate and criticize the government without fear of retaliation or prosecution by our government.

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IV. Veterans Affairs

1. We believe all active-duty and retired military, reservists, members of the Oregon National Guard, Peace Corps volunteers, and foreign service veterans should be recognized for their service to our nation with all benefits thereof.
2. Veterans of active-duty in combat regions should be compensated accordingly, and provided access to housing, healthcare, job training, and education, which facilitates re-entry into civilian life and enables veterans to meet their basic human needs.
3. We believe all active-duty military, prior to discharge, should receive mental health services, including deprogramming, from non-military professional entities to help assimilation into civilian life. They should receive training via, college, trade schools, or qualified on the job training, aimed at breaking up the current military to police pipeline.

V. Immigration

1. We believe all immigrants--including documented immigrants, immigrants with long-standing ties to Oregon communities, and undocumented immigrant workers and their families-- should have a path to legal residency, and eventually citizenship.
2. We believe policing and detention of undocumented immigrants should not be privatized or operated for profit.
3. We believe constitutional provisions granting citizenship for people born in the United States to immigrant parents must remain the law.
4. We believe a nation as deeply rooted in immigration as ours should welcome and prioritize those seeking refugee or asylum status as refugees of war, climate change, natural disasters, and extreme social violence. This includes but is not limited to: persecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity, being targeted for supporting the United States, or escaping genocide.
5. We believe asylum seekers should not be deported if it is likely they will be subject to death or harm upon return.
6. We believe immigrants deserve dignity. All people, including immigrants and their children, need to be treated equally under the law and should be granted legal and translation services and all basic human rights. Particular care should be given to keeping families together.
7. We support dismantling the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and using other systems already in place for immigration issues.
8. We support continued status as a Sanctuary county and state.

VI. Election Integrity

1. We believe in publicly-funded candidate election campaigns.
2. We believe government at all levels should regulate, limit, or prohibit campaign contributions and expenditures to restrict the influence of private or corporate wealth in the election of candidates or the passage of ballot measures. All contributions and expenditures shall be publicly disclosed.
3. We believe there should be a separate, viewable, online, personal, voter-registration database that tracks all changes to voter registration and all authorizations for such changes, to detect wrongful manipulation.
4. We support the right of political parties to nominate candidates by means of ranked-choice voting.

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VII. Voting Rights

1. We support the highest level of security, accuracy, confidence, and transparency throughout the voting process. We recognize the importance of clear instructions in the voters' pamphlet.
2. We support efforts to adopt a national vote-by-mail standard, which will increase voter turnout, reduce voter suppression, and provide secure paper trails for vote verification.
3. We believe in fair access to voting, particularly in underserved communities and communities of color. We believe in monitoring and evaluating any possible racially-motivated gerrymandering in Oregon, and that this should be determined by a politically neutral entity.
4. We believe that, as the head of government of the United States of America, the President and Vice President should be elected by national popular vote.
5. We support ranked choice voting. We are proud that the voters of Benton County have led the way.

VIII. Public Good

1. We consider public goods and services essential to society. We believe they must be equally available to rural and urban areas of Benton County, including but not limited to: high-speed internet, libraries, paved roads, education, fire protection, law enforcement, and health care.
2. We believe in progressive taxation where the burden of taxes falls least on those least capable of affording it.
3. We believe corporations and other purely legal entities are not granted the same rights as natural persons by the Constitution.
4. We believe eminent domain should never be used for the benefit of a private or corporate entity in the absence of a clear and demonstrable public need.
5. We support providing adequate state and federal monies to compensate for the impact of lost tax revenues related to public lands.
6. We defend every individual's right to freedom from surveillance, search, or seizure unless authorized by a specific "probable cause" warrant as stated in the Fourth amendment.

IX. Gun Safety

1. We support the Second Amendment.
2. We believe that hunting, sport shooting, and collection of historic firearms are in our nation's tradition.
3. We support comprehensive background checks for all gun sales and transfers.
4. We believe that gun ownership comes with the responsibility of safe storage and accountability of all firearms.
5. We believe that everyone should be safe and free from gun violence.
6. We support a ban of the civilian sale and purchase of modern military weapons, high-capacity magazines, and armor-piercing bullets.

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X. Air, Water, and Land Management

1. We believe all citizens have the right to adequate open and recreational spaces, and to clean and safe air and public water resources. The general public, government, and the regulated communities must work together to provide clean air, water, manage sewage, solid waste, and stormwater.
2. We support community planning that includes the strict enforcement of land use laws and community-based water management. We support protecting open and recreational spaces, watersheds, habitats, diversity, and comprehensive ecosystem interrelationships.
3. We believe more needs to be done to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination from agricultural chemicals, including spraying, that is a significant public health threat.
4. We believe greater efforts are needed at the local, state, and national levels to identify, reduce, and eliminate the toxic effects of hazardous chemicals, industrial processes, genetically modified organisms, nuclear waste, waste from weapons testing, fracking, and agricultural chemicals and byproducts.
5. We believe fresh surface and groundwater, and marine water resources, must be managed primarily for the public good and protected from private control, profit, and pollution.
6. We support the “polluter pays” principle. We believe that corporate profits should never preclude protection of the environment. Corporate entities must be required to internalize all environmental and human health costs.
7. We recognize that industrial development has disproportionately burdened disadvantaged populations and marginalized communities with environmental degradation and its negative effects. The Benton County Democrats believe regulatory programs must address social inequities and the dangers to impacted communities.
8. We believe the use of high-pressure hydraulic fracking should be prohibited.
9. We believe current and future Oregonians deserve the protection of state and local legislation, zoning, and building codes that reflect current best practices in earthquake- and tsunami- prone areas, and, crucially, prioritize the safety of our schools, hospitals, emergency services, and infrastructure.

XI. Natural Resources

1. We support the ecologically-sustainable management of Oregon’s renewable agricultural, water, forest, and fisheries resources, and careful management of non-renewable mineral resources. We believe that protections for native, keystone, endangered, and threatened species must be enhanced and enforced.
2. We believe in the humane treatment of farm animals from beginning to end of life, including adequate living space and opportunities for socialization, so they have a decent quality of life, which will also reduce disease and the need for antibiotics.
3. We oppose the conversion of public lands to private ownership. We support the protection of state and federally designated parks, wilderness areas, national monuments, recreation areas, beaches, and other public resource lands including places of cultural significance.
4. We support land use planning to preserve rural and natural environments. We support developmental planning to encourage energy efficient and affordable housing, transportation, and commercial development.
5. We support developing more comprehensive, strategic, and effective legal protections for our natural resources.

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6. We support establishing fees for resource use and extraction on public lands at fair market value. Restoration costs should be borne by profiting entities.

XII. Climate and Energy

1. We recognize that peer-reviewed scientific evidence has demonstrated that human activities that emit greenhouse gases have caused a global emergency known as “climate change.” We believe we must take immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce the atmospheric concentration of these gases, and decrease our negative impact on the climate.
2. We support science-based strategies to implement sustainable practices and technologies to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. We also insist that mitigation and adaptation programs acknowledge and address social inequity and the plight of impacted communities.
3. We recognize, per the U.S. Fourth National Climate Assessment issued on November 23, 2018, the massive threat climate change poses to the American economy and the need for emergency climate action at all levels of government. We advocate for “Climate Emergency Declarations” from state, county, and local municipal governments.
4. We support an equitable and just transition away from fossil fuels through promoting renewable energy sources, protecting public lands and natural resources from fossil-fuel extractive practices, prohibiting export of fossil fuels through Oregon, and providing incentives for creating clean energy jobs.
5. We support comprehensive measures to sequester carbon through improved forestry, agricultural, and rangeland practices.
6. We believe there are multiple benefits to increasing responsible development of regional, available, renewable, distributed, and resilient energy infrastructure. We support funding of programs that increase the affordability of renewable energy and energy storage technologies.
7. We support energy conservation in public, residential, and commercial buildings, as well as industrial energy efficiency through green energy policies, incentives, and education.
8. We support regulatory processes for new infrastructure that consider associated full life cycle GHG emissions, as well as the economic viability of the infrastructure in a rapidly de-carbonizing world.
9. We recognize that plastic spawns pollution throughout its entire life cycle. The polluting legacy of plastic begins at the point of fossil fuel extraction and continues throughout its energy-intensive and toxics-laden production process. Almost all plastics are made from fossil fuels, also the primary driver of climate change.
10. We support initiatives to cut the production, use and disposal of single-use plastics, and oppose the expansion of the petrochemical manufacturing industry in Oregon.
11. We recognize that climate change has wide-ranging implications for all public infrastructure. It is essential that we consider the impact of natural disasters on utilities, housing, road, bridge, and dam construction, among other things.
12. We support efforts to educate and empower Oregonians and businesses about the increased risks of natural disasters resulting from climate change and the need for laws and policies aimed at mitigating the effects of such disasters.

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XIII. Fair Sentencing

1. We oppose the death penalty.
2. We oppose mandatory minimum sentencing.
3. We believe juries should no longer be allowed to render non-unanimous verdicts in felony cases in the State of Oregon, and we support the right to a bench trial.
4. We oppose asset forfeiture for anyone who has not been convicted, or of assets that are not the proceeds of criminal acts, unless required for restoration. We oppose the use of asset forfeiture to enrich police departments.
5. We believe in the fair sentencing of youth. Youth should not be eligible for mandatory minimum sentencing or sentences of life without parole and should be given reasonable opportunities for release.
6. We support consistent sentencing for all groups, including historically-privileged groups.
7. We support alternatives to incarceration, including diversion programs, community correction centers, and treatment programs for mental and behavioral health, and substance abuse.

XIV. Prisons and Policing

1. We believe no one should profit from criminal incarceration. Jails, prisons, detention facilities, correctional medical care, and associated contracted services should not be privatized. Exploitative rules for inmate phone calls, video visits, mail, and money transfers should be outlawed.
2. We believe in the right to freedom from mass surveillance. There should be no mass surveillance, search, or seizure unless a probable cause warrant has been obtained.
3. We oppose racially-targeted policing, prosecutorial overcharging, coercive plea bargains, biased jury selection, and sentencing practices that result in a disproportionate number of African American, Latinx, Native American, other people of color, and economically-disadvantaged people entering and being trapped in the criminal justice system.
4. We support transparency from all law enforcement and criminal justice agencies. We believe there should be mechanisms in place for transparency and public reporting of all government activities, including a mechanism for mandatory reporting showing racial bias. We believe in using all available tools, including body cameras, to accomplish this.
5. We believe in protections for law-enforcement whistleblowers from the threat of punitive retaliation.
6. We believe police should implement principles of trauma-informed care, including being trained in dealing with and recognizing mental health, drug dependency, and disability issues. Police should be trained in de-escalation techniques and in languages representative of the communities they serve.
7. We believe police chiefs and officers must be held accountable to professional standards emphasizing non-violent and trauma-informed methods, as well as Oregon law regarding injuring civilians, potential suspects, or those in custody. Special prosecutors must be used to ensure unbiased accountability to the law.
8. We believe criminal offenders of Benton County should be housed locally and therefore have access to all local resources and have continued, stable contact with family, lawyers, medical providers, mental health professionals, and other applicable advocates.

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9. We support funding prevention, rehabilitation, and diversion programs such as the Respite Care Center, Sobering Center, Work Release Center, Transitional Housing, in-custody treatment for mental health, substance abuse, and cognitive-behavioral health, and in-custody education.
10. We oppose increased funding for county prosecutors without a proportional increase in funding for indigent defense.

XV. Victim, Suspect, Inmate Rights

1. We believe effective legal representation for those accused of crimes is an integral part of the American criminal justice system. Public defenders must have a manageable caseload and receive the same pay as prosecutors.
2. We support the extension of voting rights to incarcerated citizens for federal and state elections.
3. We believe prison inmates have a right to freedom from physical and sexual assault while incarcerated.
4. We support the integration of the previously incarcerated into society. We believe it is important to improve parenting and job skills by providing comprehensive education and training for those who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated.
5. We believe crime victims have a right to have a meaningful role in the criminal justice system, and they should be treated with safety, fairness, dignity, and respect.
6. We support women's, and particularly women of color's, reproductive rights by calling for reparations for all women who were sterilized without consent in jails, prisons, and state institutions.
7. We support treating drug use as a medical issue, instead of a criminal justice issue.

XVI. Social Justice and Intersectionality

1. We believe in the right of all to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, class, residency status, disability, or other identifying qualities.
2. We strongly oppose legislative efforts to abridge First Amendment rights by legalizing discrimination, profiling, persecution or prosecution as "religious freedom."
3. We support equal access for women of all ages to training, jobs, and promotions, and equal pay for equal work, and the right to sue for equal pay, capital, equity, and contracts.
4. We support affirmative action, the rights accorded to women in Title IX of the United States Education Amendments of 1972, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the United States Constitution.
5. We recognize and promote the importance of women, and particularly women of color, women in the LGBTQ+ community, women with disabilities, and women who are immigrants running for, and serving in, public office and promote the engagement of young women in our political process.
6. We support the programs of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), including educational and preventive initiatives, especially those that serve women, including trans women, at risk of sexual and domestic violence.

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7. We believe all consenting adults should have the equal and unequivocal access to medical, legal and economic rights such as civil marriage, adoption, civil unions, hospital visitation, and financial rights including health insurance, retirement benefits, and inheritance.
8. We believe schools, healthcare facilities, and other public accommodations and services must be open and welcoming to all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We support those who identify outside of the gender binary and believe in recognizing those identities.
9. We believe in expanding reparations for past injustices perpetuated by federal and state governments against minority groups. This includes slavery, discrimination, sterilization, infection, mutilation, and killing of Native Americans, Black Americans, people with disabilities, and other minority groups.
10. We fully support tribal sovereignty and tribal jurisdiction by honoring treaties and statutes that are the foundation of a trust relationship between tribes and government.
11. We believe in input or involvement from Native Americans, small farmers, cattle ranchers and other stakeholders, particularly those who have been left out historically, when land use decisions are to be made. Treaty rights must always be honored.
12. We believe people with disabilities must be provided equal opportunity to participate in our society to the fullest extent possible. We believe all levels of government should make all activities compliant with the most stringent known accessibility standards.
13. We believe organized, armed groups which seek to cause physical harm to individuals because of their perception of that individual's race, color, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin constitute a threat to our safety.

XVII. Workers Rights

1. We affirm the right to organize for collective bargaining free of intimidation or coercion, and oppose any legislation and fair-share limitation measures that would restrict these rights.
2. We believe that we must honor and respect the commitments we made to our public employees. We fully support protections for our public retirement systems.
3. We believe businesses have a responsibility to pay a living wage to their employees. We support a minimum wage tied to the cost of living in our communities and adjusted annually.
4. We support equal pay for equal work without qualification.
5. We believe in expanding workplace rights for all workers in all employment contracts, including flextime, compensatory time, and parental and family leave, and observance of safe health protocols. We support strong labor laws and the elimination of at-will employment laws.
6. We believe all Oregon workers have the right to a secure retirement, including protections of the retirement accounts from corporate bankruptcies.
7. We believe that workers both in and out of government have the right to "blow the whistle" on their employer without fear of retaliation or prosecution.

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XVIII. Business

1. We believe the economy depends upon businesses fulfilling their civic obligations and financial responsibility to support 21st century public goods by paying their fair share of taxes.
2. We support the creation and maintenance of educational pathways to living wages for all Oregonians. We support apprenticeship programs for a wide range of occupations, incorporating cooperation among schools, community colleges, unions, and businesses.
3. We support strengthening of antitrust legislation and breaking up of corporate entities whose size undermines a competitive market.
4. We believe that businesses must invest in creating well-paying, clean-energy jobs rather than subsidizing jobs dependent on fossil fuels.
5. We believe in supporting small businesses by removing unnecessary barriers and improving their access to capital.
6. We believe Oregon's tax code should move towards an equitable balance between individual and corporate taxation.

XIX. Transportation and Development

1. We believe we must reduce our reliance on fossil fuels by investing in electric and hybrid forms of personal transportation, commercial transportation, and mass transit. We believe in safe transportation options.
2. We support public-private partnerships in developing, maintaining, and upgrading our infrastructure and oppose privatization of its ownership.
3. We support the integration of safe, reliable, energy-efficient autonomous transportation options into the system, so long as they are without significant negative environmental impacts.
4. We believe that any capital improvements that receive public funding should be constructed in a sustainable manner that balances costs, benefits, and risks to the environment, economy, and society.
5. We believe communities must protect agricultural, forestry, recreation and other protected lands when planning for increased construction and development.

XX. Communications and Internet

1. We believe that the internet is an essential resource for all of society and must be classified as a public utility. Governments at all levels should invest in and maintain an up-to-date physical infrastructure that supports a free, open, secure and accessible internet.
2. We support using the internet as an interactive public forum to facilitate a conversation with people, where they are, about the critical issues of our time and to share their ideas for solutions.
3. We support further integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in our local governments to improve open information access, workplace efficiency, decision making, and public and inter-agency communication.

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XXI. Basic and Applied Research and Technology

1. We believe in strong privacy protections, including medical, personal, and financial information, for all data sharing innovations. We believe new technologies should be thoroughly evaluated for potential security issues before commercial release.
2. We believe in the protection of all encrypted data from unauthorized access in the absence of a judicial warrant.
3. We support funding research into, and advances in, biomedical techniques, including in genomics, stem cells, and neurophysiology for medical purposes.
4. We believe all medical therapies must be made equally available to all people.
5. We believe all scientific data unrelated to national security, generated with the use of public funds, including research from government institutions, should be adequately funded and openly shared.
6. We believe adequate public funding of basic and applied research at public universities and colleges is necessary to improve standards for emerging technologies.
7. We support collaborative, public-private partnerships for research in fields unrelated to national security only if robust provisions for transparency, accountability, and protection of the public interest are in place.
8. We believe in the ethical use of technology to gather information.