

# **2025 Platform of the Democratic Party of Benton County**

*Adopted by the Benton County Democratic Party on October 11, 2025*

## **Preamble**

All human beings have the right to exist and to the necessities of life, including a livable planet, clean air and water, adequate and safe food, housing, healthcare, open and safe environments, bodily autonomy, freedom of expression, and to choose the course of their own lives. These are intrinsic human rights that require mutual respect. No one is entitled to infringe on these rights, nor to achieve their own prosperity from the suffering or exploitation of others. Human beings have both a right to freedom and a responsibility to each other.

Humanity's unique strength is our ability to form communities. Government is just the expression of a community's effort to exist and prosper. The fundamental purpose of government, therefore, is to protect the community it comes from, and to provide for its prosperity in the short and long term. This safety and prosperity cannot come from the suffering and exploitation of other people, as this violates their rights. Prospering from the exploitation of others also legitimizes that behavior, giving justification for others to do the same in return. It is imperative for government to ensure rights such as free elections, freedom of the press and speech, self-determination, and many others.

In all matters of community and governance, human rights must be foundational, or the structure is doomed to fail. This platform is a guide to the principles and positions by which we as Democrats intend to achieve the purpose of governance in Benton County.

## **Article 1: Economy & Labor**

**Values Statement:** The American economic status quo is a broken system, working only to make the rich even richer, while treating the working class as an afterthought at best, or a resource to exploit at worst. The cost of living is far too high. Bold action is required to address systemic barriers to a secure and dignified quality of life.

Critical issues like healthcare, housing, and food security are matters of human rights, not solvable through market forces alone. We must stop applying one-size-fits-all thinking to complex societal issues. It is reasonable to think critically and recognize what sectors are well suited for the free market, what regulations are appropriate within them, and where the profit motive has no business operating.

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## Business

- 1. Corporate Responsibility:** Illegal activities should never benefit corporations. Too often, fines fail to effectively deter violations and simply become a cost of doing business; this must change. We strongly support legislation that will address this, and more effectively police corporate and white collar crime.
- 2. Ownership-Based Tax Rates:** Co-ops and other forms of equitable corporate organization should be encouraged and grown by supporting knowledge-sharing, providing funding via loans, and by prioritizing private and public investment.
- 3. Support for Work From Home:** Work-from-home policies should be implemented whenever practical in a workplace. We support applying additional taxes and infrastructure surcharges to employers that needlessly require workers to commute for office and other jobs that can be performed from a home setting.
- 4. Support for Unions:** Unions are the main way for employees to prevent owners from stealing wages, neglecting worker safety, and other crimes. They help distribute wealth more equitably between owners and workers and also form deep community bonds. Companies must face consequences for union-busting.
- 5. Rewarding Work Over Sloth:** We demand progressive tax reform at the state and federal level. Wages earned through labor should be taxed at lower rates than idle forms of wealth generation, with exception for retirement-based tax-advantaged accounts. Oregon needs to create additional tax brackets above the current ones.

## Workers' Rights

- 1. Wage Theft:** We acknowledge that wage theft is the largest form of theft in the United States. We support meaningful penalties for wage theft, including requiring that stolen wages be repaid at some multiple of the amount stolen.
- 2. Right-to-Sit:** Workplaces must treat workers with dignity. We support gender-neutral right-to-sit laws at state and federal levels.
- 3. Fair Pay:** We support equal pay and pay transparency including the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009.

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## **Article 2: Education**

**Values Statement:** Access to a public and high quality education is a basic right. A solid foundation of public education is the platform from which a thriving society can grow. The education of individuals must be accessible and fully funded from early childhood to post secondary and workforce training.

### **Access and Funding**

- 1. Public Education Funding:** Public education must be fully funded at all levels and accessible for all who wish to attend an educational institution. Institutions must be secular and free to attend to allow students to attain their educational goals. This includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Tribal Colleges and Universities.
- 2. Living Wages for Educators & Support Professionals:** Professional Educators at all levels must be paid a living wage commensurate to the community in which they reside. Educational institutions must also pay a living wage for school support professionals including but not limited to: educational assistants, licensed mental health providers, librarians, medical professionals, and social workers.
- 3. Special Education Support:** Special Education must be fully funded to include living wage salaries for special education providers, special education assistants and more. Every person must have access to an individual education plan if they need it and their educational institution must adhere to the programming.
- 4. Publicly Funded Child Care:** Child care must be free and accessible for all infants and children. Care must be safe, high-quality, and publicly funded.
- 5. Accessible Education for All:** Make post-secondary education and trade school tuition free. Trades and workforce education must also be available for those who wish to attend.
- 6. Education Infrastructure:** Educational institutions must be fully-funded, including infrastructure support. This means keeping buildings and institutions up to code to ensure safe learning environments for all.

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- 7. Reducing the Burden of Student Debt:** Student loan debt must be eliminated and when needed, loans should be available from the federal government with interest-free terms. The private student loan industry must be abolished. Until it is abolished, personal income must never be garnished.
- 8. Wide-Ranging Curricula:** Curricula must be diverse, inclusive, and accessible. Educators must be empowered to create science-backed, developmentally-appropriate instruction in core subjects like mathematics, science, history, civics, languages, arts, technology, literacy, and health.
- 9. Modernizing Education Privacy:** Education privacy rights include evolving technologies, and student information data must not be for sale. Student privacy must be maintained and data must be used for curricula development and outcome tracking, not profit generation for third party companies operating under a School Official designation.
- 10. School Vouchers:** School vouchers are a drain on limited educational resources, and are complicated by the varying qualities of private education. Therefore we oppose the institution of school vouchers.

### **Article 3: Environment**

**Values Statement:** The current climate emergency and biodiversity crisis requires immediate and sustained action to avoid irreversible, catastrophic impacts. We recognize that all living things, including future generations, have inherent fundamental rights to a clean, safe, and healthy environment, including but not limited to clean air, clean water, thriving ecosystems, and a stable climate. Oregon's public natural resources are the common property of the people, that Benton County shall conserve against substantial impairment, and restore for the benefit of all.

#### **Air, Water, and Land Management**

- 1. Traditional Ecological Knowledge & Tribal Land Stewardship:** As the stewards of this land since time immemorial, representatives from all Oregon tribes, regardless of Federal recognition status, should have permanent seats made available to them on all state and local environmental decision-making committees and departmental organizations; including in Benton County, part of the traditional lands of the Kalapuya.

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- 2. The Right to a Clean Environment:** Ecosystems aren't contained by political or ownership boundaries. Natural resources are inherently communal and they aren't infinite; they can't be used in excess of their regeneration rate. Effective regulation, and long-term place- and process-based stewardship frameworks, are needed to ensure that no one over-exploits or degrades these systems.
- 3. Valuing Intact Ecosystems:** Oregon's ecosystems should be valued for the services they provide to our local communities, state, country, and world, including but not limited to: habitat and biodiversity, oxygen production, carbon sequestration, air and water purification, natural disaster mitigation, food production, natural laboratories, and educational and recreational opportunities.
- 4. Fair and Meaningful Involvement in Decision-Making:** Communities with historically or currently little financial or political power, including tribal nations, have been unfairly, adversely impacted by pollution and environmental degradation. We support fair, meaningful involvement of all people in environmental decision-making, including fully integrating environmental justice organizations and programs, to protect all communities.
- 5. Effective Land Use Management:** Land use regulations are essential to preserve farm, range, and forest lands, manage transportation, and more. Robust incentives for working lands are needed, especially in agriculture, to use regenerative practices and improve ecological conditions. Urgent action is needed to better manage our water resources.
- 6. A Demand for Evidence-Based Science:** Evidence-based science should be used to understand risks to human and ecological health. This includes supporting programs to monitor air, land, and water quality to assess long-term trends, identify sources of pollution, and assess the effectiveness of pollution prevention programs.
- 7. Protect Native & Keystone Species:** We must protect native, keystone, endangered, and threatened species and the habitats that sustain them. All measures taken to protect and manage native species must include the free, prior, and informed consent and sustained collaboration of Oregon's tribal nations, regardless of Federal recognition status.
- 8. High Priority Invasive Species Management:** Certain invasive species represent extreme threats to Oregon's natural resources, agriculture, and infrastructure. Programs to study and to develop and implement management strategies for these species (including the emerald ash borer, Mediterranean oak borer, and spotted lanternfly), must be robustly funded and supported with appropriate policy.

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- 9. Co-Existence:** Policy and funding should be directed towards co-existence strategies that facilitate the movement of native species through the landscape via actions like the resolution of passage barriers, creation of wildlife crossings, establishment of robust habitat corridors, use of native plants in urban landscapes, human/wildlife deconfliction strategies, and more.
- 10. Waste Reduction, Reuse, & the Right to Repair:** Waste should be reduced and recycling and reuse programs should be expanded, including rights to repair. We support eliminating non-degradable products, beginning with non-recyclable and single-use plastics. Implement stringent policies to regulate pollution. Apply Oregon's Extended Producer Responsibility to more industries to control waste and support reuse models.
- 11. Preventing Groundwater Contamination:** Regulatory actions must be undertaken to reduce the contamination of Oregon's groundwater. Strengthen outreach to potential victims of water contamination to provide safe drinking water. Private wells contaminated with nitrates, arsenic, leachate, PFAS, and pesticides pose a significant health risk to private well users.

## Animal Welfare

- 1. Humane Treatment of Farm Animals:** Farm animals should be treated humanely from start to end of life, including adequate living space and opportunities for socialization, ensuring a decent quality of life, which will reduce disease and the need for antibiotics.
- 2. Humane Pet Trade:** The commercial trade of domestic and exotic pets must ensure the humane treatment of all animals at every stage. Suppliers and vendors must comply with robust, fair sourcing and care standards. Governments should enforce these standards in their communities, with permits to operate being conditioned upon passing inspections.
- 3. Exotic Pet Regulation:** Exotic pets must not be released into the wild to become invasive species. The purchase, birth, and death of exotic animals should be tracked and regulated, and owners who release their exotic pets must be held accountable.

## Climate and Energy

- 1. Greenhouse Gas Reduction:** Climate change brought on by human activities is an undeniable threat to humankind. We support the aggressive reduction of greenhouse gas emissions through rapid decarbonization, and carbon storage initiatives. We oppose using Oregon's natural carbon storage as offsets for greenhouse gas emissions.

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- 2. Valuing the Public's Natural Resources:** Natural resources on public lands should generally not be open to private, extractive enterprises, with a stricter threshold for non renewable resources. When private utilization does occur, we support use of fair, market value fees. Reclamation and restoration should be guided by up-to-date science, with the costs borne by the profiting entities.
- 3. Science-Based Strategies:** Science-based strategies must be used to research, develop, and implement sustainable practices and technologies to address and adapt to climate change.
- 4. Clean Energy Transition:** We must equitably and justly transition from fossil fuels to clean energy. This should include protecting public and tribal lands from fossil fuel extraction, prohibiting export of fossil fuels through Oregon, providing incentives for clean energy job creation, and increasing the affordability of renewable energy and energy storage technologies.
- 5. Emissions Monitoring & Tax:** We support the monitoring of greenhouse gasses and taxes on them to meet emissions reduction targets.
- 6. Mitigating Climate Change Impacts:** Urgent, sustained action is needed to improve climate resiliency in Oregon. This includes rapidly mitigating urban heat islands with a focus on equitable implementation and the use of native species, proactive mitigation of future natural disasters such as wildfires and flooding, and prioritizing water conservation in anticipation of droughts.

### **Natural Disaster Readiness**

- 1. Readiness Education:** Oregonians and businesses should be empowered and educated 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.
- 2. Readiness Planning:** Every element of state and local government must tackle natural disaster risk proactively. Legislation, zoning, and building codes must reflect up-to-date best practices in disaster-prone areas, while facilitating managed retreat when necessary. They must also prioritize the safety and resilience of schools, hospitals, emergency services, and critical infrastructure.
- 3. Public Disaster Recovery Insurance:** The profit motive has no place in disaster recovery because of the vulnerability of people devastated by forces beyond their control. Local and state government must find a way to provide public disaster insurance so that its people never have legitimate claims denied or underpaid to satisfy greed.

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- 4. Community Resilience:** Legislators must do more to prepare communities through regional community resilience centers that provide safe refuge and supplies for humans and animals alike that are affected by climate events and disasters. These centers should be ready to support large numbers and varieties of needs.

## **Article 4: Foreign Policy and National Security**

**Values Statement:** Benton County Democrats believe security starts at home with protecting our democracy from extremists, guaranteeing rights for all, and keeping communities safe. We recognize that foreign and domestic threats exist and support robust defenses against them. Our influence on the global stage cannot be overstated. In our aspiration to be the beacon of hope and freedom we call ourselves, we must continue to bend our moral arc towards justice. The United States must participate in international treaties and organizations, support allies, give aid to countries in need, and stand against injustice.

### **State & National Security and Foreign Policy**

- 1. Militarization of Law Enforcement:** Police departments shouldn't receive discounted or free military equipment. We support ending the 1033 federal grant program that enables these transfers.
- 2. Standing with Democracy:** All democratic governments have shared interests. America should support democratic governments in their struggles with authoritarianism.
- 3. USAID, AmeriCorps, Job Corps, & Peace Corps:** We condemn the unconstitutional closure of organizations that support human development domestically and internationally such as AmeriCorps, Job Corps, and Peace Corps and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We also recognize the foreign and domestic impacts of our volunteers and support the full funding of these organizations.
- 4. Autonomous Weapons:** All offensive weapons should have a human, not a machine or computer, making final weapon usage decisions.
- 5. Congressional War Powers:** Appropriations for declaring war or other military actions resides solely with Congress, as Constitutionally-mandated.
- 6. Fiscal Responsibility:** We support making smarter weapons systems purchases to save the taxpayers money. The Department of Defense must be required to regularly pass fiscal audits.

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- 7. International Treaties:** We support the continued participation of the United States in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The United States must also recognize the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice, and adhere to their rulings.
- 8. Paths to Peace:** In all international conflicts, we oppose all actions that move them further from a fair and humane conclusion.
- 9. Opposition to Genocide & Apartheid:** We strongly condemn apartheid and oppose American tax dollars being used to fund genocide and apartheid anywhere in the world.
- 10. Opposition to Human Rights Violations:** We freely criticize all government oppression of specific groups, and reserve the right to oppose human rights violations anywhere they occur.
- 11. First Amendment Rights:** We strongly oppose conflating criticism of Israel's government with “anti-Semitism,” which suppresses free speech, harms Jewish people, is used to persecute protestors, and perpetuates Islamophobia.
- 12. Stand With Democracies, Not Dictators:** We pledge support for NATO, the UN, and vulnerable democracies worldwide. Diplomacy—not aggression—comes first. Our alliances with free nations provide strength against autocrats. The U.S. and its states, including Oregon, must divest from any foreign partner committing war crimes, human rights abuses, or unprovoked aggression.
- 13. The Arsenal of Democracy:** The U.S. has a unique role and responsibility as the ‘arsenal of democracy’. We should provide appropriate support only to allies in genuine need. Our resources must be leveraged to prevent atrocities.
- 14. Decarbonization is a Matter of National Security and Global Stability:** Too many of the world’s fossil fuel resources are controlled by authoritarian powers. Our reliance on these resources props up dictators and gives them undue leverage over democracies. Aggressive decarbonization is required not only to mitigate climate change, but also to improve global security and promote universal human rights.

### **Veterans Affairs**

- 1. Veteran Health Care:** Until free public healthcare for all becomes a reality, the VA and other appropriate institutions must be given the full funding and support required to provide comprehensive healthcare to those who have served in our Nation’s military, regardless of time served, duty status, or whether they were combatants.

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- 2. Transition to Civilian Life:** Until free public education and trade schooling for all becomes a reality, appropriate funding and support must be provided for comprehensive education, job, and skills training for those who have served in our Nation's military, regardless of time served, duty status, or whether they were combatants.
- 3. Suicide Prevention:** The U.S. veteran suicide rate is more than twice that of non veterans. Every possible effort must be made to identify the causes of this and to dramatically reduce it. Policy and funding should be directed towards this effort to the full extent required.

## **Article 5: Healthcare and Public Health**

**Values Statement:** Healthcare is a basic human right, not a privilege. Serving our community means ensuring each person and community has equitable access to services and resources that support their health, regardless of their background or circumstances. Every person deserves access to quality care — including but not limited to medical, dental, mental health, vision, hearing, and medicinal — without being impeded by cost or other systemic barriers. Access to quality healthcare is a necessity for every individual and community to thrive. We have the right to determine what is best for our well-being in collaboration with medical professionals and those we choose to include in our care – that decision should never be left up to for-profit businesses or inhibited by various barriers created by insurance companies such as narrow provider networks in less populated areas, high costs to necessary healthcare, denial of coverage for essential services, delayed care due to cost or logistical challenges, and other barriers created by insurance companies. We're committed to building a system that puts patients over profits, saves lives, and uplifts all.

### **Healthcare**

- 1. Bold Local Action:** We must aggressively pursue sectors of public healthcare that are achievable now through local action. This includes making EMS a free public service the way police and fire departments are, providing free childbirth and maternal care services for every resident, creating regional collaboratives to negotiate drug prices, and more.

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- 2. Healthcare Co-Ops:** Until universal healthcare is implemented, we support affordable health care access including new models of care like health care cooperatives, where people can receive health care outside of private health insurance networks.
- 3. Addiction is a Treatable Disease:** Substance use disorder is a medical condition, not criminal behavior. We support treatment that prioritizes harm reduction, evidence-based strategies and research, and non-stigmatizing treatment, affordable for every individual.
- 4. Regulate Alternative Medicine Fairly:** We support the continued regulation and licensing of alternative healing practices and medicines, including acupuncture, naturopathy, medical cannabis, and psilocybin, particularly as they are used to relieve pain and lessen the impacts of trauma.
- 5. Healthcare vs. Profit:** Medical treatment should be decided between the patient and their medical providers. We support meaningful compensation for unjustly denied or delayed claims. Our health should never be determined by a for-profit system.
- 6. Patient Right to Privacy:** Patients have a right to privacy and confidentiality, to access their own medical records, a pathway to remove sensitive information that may put their physical self at risk for harm, HIPAA, and protection from disclosure of personal health information without patients' legal consent.

### **Public Health**

- 1. Healthcare is a Human Right:** All humans have a right to accessible high-quality, evidence-based healthcare. Denying care is cruel; any form of medical discrimination is abhorrent. We support an equitable, comprehensive universal healthcare system that includes general, preventative, emergency, gender-affirming, abortion, fertility, full spectrum reproductive care, medications, vision, dental, hearing, and mental health services.
- 2. Healthcare in Every Community:** Inaccessible healthcare stems from systemic inequities that create barriers. We're committed to holistically fully funding programs and community health centers—especially in rural and historically underserved communities—while centering community members who are directly impacted. No one's zip code should dictate their access to quality healthcare necessary to thrive.

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- 3. Collaboration with Culturally Specific Communities:** Culturally-informed healthcare is an integral part of serving everyone in our community. Healthy communities require protecting community wellbeing, which should always include and center the voices of those directly impacted. Every community has the right to self-determination, and that collaboration begins with learning from others.
- 4. Bodily Autonomy is Non-Negotiable:** Every person has absolute control over their body. Whether choosing abortion, pregnancy care, gender-affirming care, or end-of-life decisions, no one needs permission from courts, partners, or politicians to control their body. We demand fully-funded, culturally competent healthcare that respects bodily autonomy from birth to death.
- 5. Addressing Root Causes:** We support equitable, collaborative research and evidence based measures to address root causes of health disparities including systemic racism, gun violence, suicide, domestic violence, housing insecurity, poverty, food insecurity, substance-use disorder, behavioral addiction, epidemics, pandemics and endemics, and other disparities due to race, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexual orientation.
- 6. Gun Violence is a Public Health Issue:** We respect the sustainable practices of regulated hunting, sport shooting, and self defense for all. These practices should co-exist with equitable, evidence-based policies and practices, including holding political appointees and gun manufacturers accountable to reduce suicides, mass shootings, and provide more gun safety measures.
- 7. Bias is Lethal:** Misinformation and bigotry put lives at risk. We support healthcare free from racism, bias, and colonialist narratives. Systemic inequities lead to harmful misdiagnosis, unequal pain treatment, and worse outcomes for culturally-specific and historically underserved communities. We must dismantle biased and racist medical systems and fight misinformation.
- 8. Inclusive Language Demonstrates Care:** All healthcare providers must make health information universally accessible; eliminating exclusionary language will lead to positive health outcomes for all, and increased transparency and trust between healthcare providers and the communities they serve.
- 9. Trans Health is Healthcare:** The full spectrum of gender-affirming care, including but not limited to mental healthcare, puberty blockers, hormone replacement therapy, electrolysis, laser hair removal, voice training, and gender confirmation surgeries, is a human right for all who so desire it and is a critical element of bodily autonomy.

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- 10. Sanctuary Laws:** We support shield and sanctuary laws in Oregon, protecting providers, patients, and any individuals supporting them from facing criminalization in other states for seeking or providing any form of healthcare.
- 11. Vaccines Save Lives:** Approved, licensed vaccines are a critical component necessary to protect public health, as well as public education regarding the efficacy and safety of vaccination programs. Vaccine research should be expanded to prevent disease. States should adhere to science-based recommendations for vaccine programs and coverage.
- 12. Global Collaboration & Research:** We support robust and equitable collaboration between international health services and countries on research efforts to prevent and control the spread of pandemics and improve health for all through transparent education. We support treatment methods of communicable diseases that are culturally-informed and do not perpetuate stigmatization.
- 13. Preventing Childhood Abuse, Neglect & Coercion:** Prevention of childhood traumas must be prioritized, including mental, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. We support human service institutions' ability to serve those impacted through harm reduction strategies that are evidence-based and culturally informed.

## **Article 6: Human Rights**

**Values Statement:** Benton County Democrats stand with the people — not the powerful. We champion real freedom: the freedom to live, work, and love without fear. We believe that people around the world are entitled to inviolable human rights, and that Americans have additional Constitutional rights, which include the Bill of Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We demand that all those within our borders be treated with decency and respect, especially in regard to due process of law. We believe in a just society, where equity and justice are the rule instead of the exception. Oppression has no place here, and we won't back down until every Oregonian gets the opportunities they deserve.

### **Basic Needs**

- 1. Food Security:** Food is a fundamental human right, and no one should go hungry. Hunger is a policy failure, not a personal one. We are committed to expanding food assistance programs, strengthening local and sustainable food systems, eliminating food deserts, and protecting the rights of workers and families across the food chain.

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- 2. Food Waste:** Businesses throwing away, poisoning, or burning unsold food while people go hungry is a tragedy. Businesses must coordinate with food banks, aid networks, and other local organizations to reduce food waste while feeding the hungry.
- 3. Housing:** Every Oregonian has the right to safe, healthy, and affordable housing and shelter. We support actions to address the epidemic of displacement from housing in our local communities and across the state, and support sustainable policies to increase the supply of affordable housing for all.

## Immigration

- 1. No One Is Illegal On Stolen Land:** We stand with immigrants and support clear pathways to citizenship. Immigrants need to be treated equally under the law, not be separated from their families, granted swift legal and language services, and all basic human rights. Granting citizenship for people born in the United States must remain law.
- 2. The Immigration System:** We support dismantling Immigration and Customs Enforcement in favor of using other systems already in place for immigration. Policing and detention of immigrants should not be privatized or operated for profit. We support Benton County as a sanctuary county.
- 3. The Right to Seek Asylum:** Our nation of immigrants should welcome those seeking refuge or asylum from war, genocide, climate change, natural disasters, and social violence. We support eliminating policies that preemptively deny eligibility or force asylum-seekers to wait in third countries. No one should be deported if they will be harmed upon return.
- 4. Built by Immigrants:** Immigrants are already widely employed and a keystone of our economy. We must provide an accessible and timely pathway for legal residency.

## Justice System

- 1. Justice System Reform:** We reject systems that criminalize poverty, housing status, or disability. Replace punitive justice with restorative models, abolish prison labor, return voting rights to the incarcerated or previously incarcerated, and fund public defenders equitably. Preserve due process while respecting the rights of the defendant or victim.

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- 2. Fair Sentencing:** We believe in fair, consistent sentencing for all. We support alternatives to incarceration, including diversion programs, community correction centers, and treatment programs. We oppose the death penalty. We oppose mandatory minimums. Juries should not give non-unanimous verdicts in felony cases. We support the right to a bench trial.
- 3. Local Crime, Local Time:** Criminal offenders 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.
- 4. Rehabilitation:** We support removing barriers to the integration of the previously incarcerated into society. We believe it is important to improve social and job skills by providing comprehensive education and training for those who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated.
- 5. Police Reform:** We expect transparency from all law enforcement and criminal justice agencies. We oppose unconvicted asset forfeiture and the use of asset forfeiture to enrich police departments. Police should be trained in and implement principles of trauma informed care, de-escalation, mental health, drug dependency, and disability issues. End qualified immunity.
- 6. Privacy Rights:** We believe in the right to freedom from mass surveillance. There should be no mass surveillance, search, or seizure unless a signed judicial warrant has been obtained. We support the use of police body cams for accountability but with utmost care taken to ensure privacy rights.

## Social Justice

- 1. People are People:** All people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, class, residency status, disability, or other identifiers. We oppose efforts to legalize discrimination, profiling, persecution, or prosecution.
- 2. Human Interdependence is Key to our Survival:** Human interdependence has been and remains key to our survival since time immemorial. All forms of discrimination such as, but not limited to; racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, classism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia dangerously reduce our chances of survival as a single human race.

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- 3. Bodily Autonomy, Identity, & Healthcare:** We believe in access to all forms of gender affirming care without restriction. Everyone deserves full control over their body and no government or religion should dictate personal medical decisions. Services must be accessible to all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We support and recognize all gender-expansive identities.
- 4. Bury Guns, Not People:** The slaughter of distinct cultural groups, known as genocide, is a stain on global conscience. We have a responsibility to intervene. National policy should never enable, fund, obscure, or ignore crimes against humanity. We acknowledge the historical genocides of Black and Indigenous people in the United States.
- 5. Dismantling Racist Systems:** White supremacy is a moral failing in our society. We must reject this belief and work to destroy its institutions as it actively causes harm and creates barriers to the pursuit of freedom and justice for all.
- 6. Reparations & Restorative Justice:** America legalized and profited from enslavement of Africans for hundreds of years, making the U.S. a leading global economy. Reparations and restorative justice are long overdue to Black people and African Americans, whose ancestors shaped our country's infrastructure, lived through the Jim Crow era, and persist despite ongoing systemic persecution.
- 7. Land Back:** We demand restorative justice, returning land, and other reparations for the genocide and crimes committed against Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge the long history of erasure, cruelty, and thefts inflicted by the United States. We affirm that tribal nations are sovereign governments whose rights, jurisdictions, and treaty obligations must be honored.
- 8. Disability Rights:** All people with disabilities must retain their bodily autonomy and have access to the full spectrum of care and accommodations. People with disabilities must be provided equal opportunity to fully participate in society. We oppose ableism and eugenics.
- 9. "Remember the Ladies" - Abigail Adams:** We support equal access for all women of all ages to education, training, jobs, pay, promotions, and safety from violence. We support affirmative action, Title IX, and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. We recognize and promote the importance of women in our lives and in the world.

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## **Article 7: Infrastructure**

**Values Statement:** All infrastructure projects must be undertaken with full attention to cost benefit analyses, economic and environmental impacts, equity, and justice. We believe in righting historical injustices, such as environmental racism and exposure to hazardous materials. We believe in using the best peer-reviewed science and technology to develop and maintain essential infrastructure and to prevent and prepare to combat natural, technological, public health, terrorist, or other infrastructure disruptions.

### **Transportation**

- 1. Infrastructure Development & Management:** We support transparent funding of public infrastructure development, maintenance, and upgrades. We oppose privatization of public infrastructure. All infrastructure projects must be undertaken with consideration of economic impact, equity, cost-benefit, and environmental impact.
- 2. Pedestrian & Transit Priority:** We support the development of multi-modal transportation. Infrastructure should be constructed with transit in mind.
- 3. Protecting Oregon Railways, Rivers, & Communities:** Our state's railways, rivers, and communities shouldn't be threatened by the possibility of derailment by freight trains or hazardous storage conditions. Rail companies are responsible for maintaining their equipment and failures leading to environmental contamination must be remediated at the company or owner's expense.
- 4. Solar Energy Access & Energy Conservation Standards:** We support strong energy efficiency and solar access standards in residential, commercial, and industrial construction and incentives to reduce energy waste.
- 5. Transportation Development:** We support comprehensive implementation of safe, reliable, active transportation routes and expanding accessible, fareless, and low-emission public transit systems. America's commercial transportation network should be improved, including rail electrification, and expanding the freight rail network.
- 6. Infrastructure & Climate Goals:** We support a rapid transition to clean, renewable energy infrastructure, including electric vehicle charging stations. We oppose any expansion of fossil-fuel infrastructure, including pipelines.

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## Services

- 1. Public Ownership of Public Goods:** Critical elements of infrastructure, especially relating to water supply, transportation access, the internet, and hazard response must remain in public ownership.
- 2. Net Neutrality:** Internet service providers should treat all internet communications equally. Consistent transfer rates should be provided regardless of content, website, user, or application, and without price discrimination.
- 3. High-Speed Internet Accessibility:** Make high-speed, secure, broadband internet a public utility, accessible to all.
- 4. Energy Usage:** AI and cryptocurrency technologies are highly energy intensive. Because costs from these activities are localized while their benefits are exported, residential and medical power consumption must take precedence over these commercial uses.

## Zoning, Development, & Public Use Facilities

- 1. Historical Justice:** Society has historically favored certain communities with accessibility to public-use facilities such as parks. We support targeting future public-use facility development towards historically under-served communities.
- 2. Environmental Justice:** We must have infrastructure that supports a climate-friendly future in urban areas. We recognize the negative impacts that infrastructure projects may have on communities and support public and transparent processes to help evaluate and understand their impact on affected communities.
- 3. Increase Housing Stock:** We support increasing housing stock within urban growth boundaries, including high-density, medium-density, and mixed-use developments to fight sprawl. We recognize the need for various housing types to support multiple living situations.
- 4. Zoning Overhaul:** We recognize zoning as an artificial barrier to denser, more climate friendly, and more economically active development in our communities. We support making residential zones mixed-use, streamlining adjustments to housing density, and exploring form-based codes, to create more walkable communities.

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## **Article 8: Protecting Democracy**

**Values Statement:** Benton County Democrats are committed to a democracy founded on ethics, equity, and dialogue. Democracy is not simply a form of government but an evolving, participatory practice. A just society depends on ethical participation, collective reasoning, and systems that respond to the will and needs of the people. Access to public information and transparent governance are essential to meaningful participation and accountability. No person's socioeconomic status or demographic background should restrict their ability to participate in the political process. Every voting-age citizen has both the right and the civic responsibility to participate in elections without obstruction as part of a shared democratic practice. Systems of power disproportionately attract those who desire power, and the nature of power corrupts. These systems must be reformed to reject and remove those who seek power for self-serving reasons, actively recruit those who are civic-minded, and buffer against the corrupting influence of power. Benton County can be a model of democratic engagement through transparency, ethical leadership, and open dialogue. We commit ourselves to these ideals as both voters and community members.

Finally, it must be stated clearly and without equivocation: we are living through the most dangerous authoritarian takeover attempt in American history, threatening centuries of democratic progress. There is an active constitutional crisis as of this platform's writing. We all must do our part to respond to it forcefully and with the utmost urgency.

### **Anti-Corruption**

- 1. Ethical Standards:** We expect full transparency from public officials, candidates, campaigns, and the Democratic Party at all levels. All political parties, including our own, must be held to the same ethical standards we demand from elected officials and civil servants.
- 2. Campaign Finance Reform:** We call for comprehensive campaign finance reform, including strict contribution limits, donor disclosure, and public financing to elevate small donors over big money. Any donations must be subject to thorough oversight, including any donations made via crypto. Dismantle the Citizen's United decision.

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- 3. Political Violence & Abuse of Power:** We condemn threats, harassment, and violence against public officials and demand respectful, constructive civic engagement. We rebuke any leader who promotes voter suppression, nullification, or terroristic threats, and we demand that all public servants act with honesty and integrity.
- 4. Civil Service, Not Personal Gain:** Public office must never be misused for personal gain, regardless of party affiliation. We strongly support a ban on individual stock and cryptocurrency trading by all government officials and their immediate family, including claimed dependents.
- 5. Ethical Responsibility of the Democratic Party:** The body of the Democratic Party (not elected officials or monied interests) has a duty to present voters with candidates that will work for the public good. This includes proactive recruitment of civic-minded candidates, the creation of barriers to those who seek power for corrupt purposes, and carefully considered endorsements.
- 6. Term Limits:** All public offices must be term-limited. Elected representatives should be able to serve multiple terms so they can improve at their job, but indefinite service only promotes complacency, suppresses innovation, and creates opportunities for corruption. This must be enacted at all levels of government, and include the judicial branch.
- 7. Citizen Review Boards:** Public oversight of government helps ensure power is wielded for the public good, not corrupt self-interest. We support the creation of randomized, paid citizen review boards, where they don't already exist, that convene regularly to review the actions of elected officials and institutions of power.

### **A Party of and For the People**

- 1. A Pluralistic, Participatory Democracy:** Democracy requires open debate, representation of all people, respect for minority voices, and majority decision-making grounded in reasoned discourse. We recognize the importance of broad community participation and urge all individuals to engage in this process, regardless of political affiliation.
- 2. The First Amendment:** We affirm the critical importance of First Amendment rights and fully support the right to peaceful protest. We will oppose any use of intimidation, harassment, or over-policing of civic action.

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- 3. Community Engagement:** The Democratic Party should be actively involved in the communities it's a part of. People shouldn't hear from us only when we're asking for money or votes. The Party must live its values through volunteering and other community initiatives that build a more inclusive and engaged Benton County.

### Voting Rights

- 1. Voter Enfranchisement:** We support full voting rights for all age-eligible citizens, including those convicted of crimes, before, during, and after their sentences.
- 2. An Informed Electorate:** A strong democracy requires an informed electorate; all contested elections, including local races, must include accessible, county-published voter guides — online at minimum.
- 3. Election Security:** We advocate for accurate, secure, and transparent elections that increase voter participation and protect against suppression. We must strengthen elections against undue interference. Unusual voting patterns must be flagged, publicly announced, and thoroughly investigated to maintain election integrity.
- 4. Election Accessibility:** We support universal vote-by-mail elections, expanded early voting, and other accessible methods that remove obstacles to the ballot. We oppose all efforts to restrict voting access and call for proactive measures to ensure equitable participation across Benton County's diverse communities.
- 5. Vote Your Conscience:** We strongly support the Ranked-Choice Voting method which minimizes vote splitting and better reflects the true preference of voters.

### Restoring the Constitutional Order

- 1. The State of Decay:** The current Presidential administration is flagrantly corrupt and increasingly authoritarian; violating the Constitution and federal law, and committing crimes against humanity. Trump's abuse of power has revealed alarming structural weaknesses in the constitutional order that make our nation more susceptible to authoritarianism than previous norms allowed many to believe.
- 2. Emergency Powers Reform:** Throughout history, aspiring dictators tend to use the pretext of emergencies to entrench their positions in power; the Trump administration is using this same ancient playbook. Presidential emergency powers must be carefully scrutinized, rigorously reformed, and repealed when necessary, to prevent such abuses.

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- 3. Executive Branch Reform:** We demand comprehensive reform of the Federal Executive. Institutions meant to operate independently from the Executive must be enshrined as such. Previously non-binding norms such as candidates' release of tax returns must be codified into law. Rulings that the Executive is in any way above the law must be overturned.
- 4. Supreme Court Reform:** Reform is urgently needed to roll back and prevent the capture of the Judicial Branch's highest court by partisans, as has happened with the current bench. Congress must implement significant reforms, including staggered term limits, a binding code of conduct, expansion of the bench if necessary, and more.
- 5. Fascists Must Face Justice:** The U.S. has no domestic statute defining crimes against humanity as federal offenses. This gap must be resolved. Following this, we demand prosecution of all officials and ICE agents involved in kidnappings, the creation or filling of domestic concentration camps, and deporting people to foreign prisons.
- 6. State & Local Fascist Deterrence:** State and local lawmakers must urgently review current laws, crafting any amendments necessary, and identify every possible statute that can be used to prosecute administration officials and ICE agents that choose to participate in unconstitutional, authoritarian actions and crimes against humanity. "Just following orders." is an unacceptable defense.
- 7. Countering Authoritarian Coercion:** Federal support of state and local governments is being used as a tool of leverage and coercion, to force compliance with authoritarian projects. We have a duty to rapidly decouple ourselves from these sources of leverage, in coalition with as many others as possible, so compliance cannot be forced.
- 8. Duty to Resist:** State and local governments have a duty to resist when other spheres of government undertake unconstitutional and illegal activities that impact Oregon communities. This duty must be enacted boldly and strategically, with every legal resource and tactic possible; doing everything in their power to protect residents from autocratic overreach.

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## **Article 9: Science and Technology**

**Values Statement:** Benton County Democrats believe evidence-based science and engineering should form the basis of decisions made by the government in economics, health, the environment, and technology. The scientific method is the most reliable basis for preparing for the future. We welcome experimentation and innovation in medicine, information technology, and space, ocean, climate and social sciences, but caution that global integration requires attention to social impacts in all fields. Governments have a responsibility to heed advice from the scientific community and act accordingly for the benefit of the public.

### **Ethics**

- 1. Data Privacy:** We believe in strong privacy protections, including medical, personal, and financial information, for all data sharing innovations. New technologies should be thoroughly evaluated for potential security issues before commercial release. People should retain full control over their personal data.
- 2. Data Encryption:** Personal data, including medical, financial, and educational, should be protected by robust encryption protocols, in transit and at rest, uninhibited by back doors or key escrow. People must always have options to have their data deleted by companies tracking and compiling it.
- 3. Data Privacy in Law Enforcement:** Law enforcement at many levels is buying data on the open market that would otherwise require a warrant, exploiting a Constitutional loophole that must be closed. All data must be protected from unauthorized access in the absence of a judicial warrant.
- 4. AI:** The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses both benefits and risks to individuals and communities, we urge public discussion and cautious regulation of AI advances and their application. Developers and users must honor intellectual property rights, respect the value of human labor and creativity, and avoid invasion of privacy.
- 5. Facial Scans:** We oppose any laws that would require invasive, privacy-violating facial scans to access social media, any other websites, or services. This technology has high error rates and performs poorly on members of historically underserved communities.

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- 6. Research Equity:** We recognize health research has historical biases in terms of which groups are served by it and support a balanced approach in allocating research resources. We support racial, cultural and gender equity in peer reviewed medical and behavioral health research.
- 7. Cryptocurrency:** Cryptocurrency schemes must be fully regulated to prevent criminal use, protect privacy of financial data, and address environmental and energy impacts.
- 8. Algorithm Transparency:** Algorithms must be utilized in an equitable manner, free from bias or exclusionary practices. Algorithms must not be utilized to set prices or enforce models that have disproportionate impacts.

### **Implementation**

- 1. Open Source Software:** Free and open source software (FOSS), as defined by the Open Source Initiative, is critical, cost-effective public infrastructure. We support funding FOSS initiatives.
- 2. Information:** We support independent, not-for-profit, transparent, and easily accessible fact-checking platforms to limit the spread and negative impacts of errors and misinformation. We support programs to educate the public on critical thinking, the scientific method, and how to identify misinformation and disinformation.
- 3. Standards in AI-Generated Media:** AI content must be labeled as such to limit its use in fraud and disinformation.
- 4. AI use in Law Enforcement:** We recognize the danger of AI-generated video and other evidence being used to frame innocent people for criminal offenses. Make it illegal for any law enforcement officer to use generative AI in the creation of official police reports or evidence.
- 5. AI use in Government Administration:** We recognize the inherent limitations of AI algorithms, and we believe that all government services must be accessible without interfacing with AI chat bots. We oppose using AI algorithms for the determination of any form of government benefits or the allocation of policing resources.
- 6. Internet Moderation:** Parents hold the responsibility to keep their children off of objectionable websites. The free and open internet should not be dissolved to do the work of parents for them.

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- 7. Online Free Speech Protection:** We affirm support for Section 230. We support passing shield laws that will prevent extradition and enforcement of civil judgments against citizens for exercising their constitutionally protected freedom of expression.

## Research and Development

- 1. Space for All:** We support publicly funded space research and exploration. We support international cooperation to promote safety and mutual development so that space and planetary bodies remain the common domain of humanity.
- 2. Public, Open Source Science:** 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. Robust funding of basic and applied research at public universities and colleges is necessary to improve standards for emerging technologies.
- 3. Basic Research:** Humanity benefits from basic research in all areas of science, regardless of possible commercial applications. We support state and federal funding programs, including public-private partnerships, for basic and applied research at academic institutions. Publicly funded research should be openly shared and publicly accountable.
- 4. Medical Research:** We support funding research and development in biomedical technology, including but not limited to: genomics, mRNA, organ cloning, stem cell research, and neurophysiology for medical purposes.
- 5. Public Health:** We support the expansion of public funding for vaccine research and development, disease prevention, and strengthening preparedness for future public health threats. We support international collaboration on disease research and pandemic response, and the coordination of data sharing and planning to improve global public health outcomes.