

MAINE DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM 2016

Preamble

Our American democracy is a powerful and effective form of organization that strives to treat all with dignity and functions for the betterment of the collective good.

Democrats believe that the foundation of a strong democracy is an educated and informed electorate. We believe that in a democracy all members of this electorate have the right and an obligation to collectively set the political agenda and to debate those issues important to them.

Building on that foundation, Maine Democrats will work actively to ensure that all people in Maine have:

- *Economic, racial and social fairness, security, opportunity, and justice*
- *Universal access to quality healthcare and education*
- *Ethical, transparent, and accountable government*
- *Freedom to make personal choices*
- *Safety and national security*
- *Guarantees of all human and civil rights*
- *Environmental protection and sustainability*
- *The benefits of global peace*
- *A fair, progressive system of taxes.*

We have long fought and will continue to fight for these policies and principles.

We adopt this platform as an expression of what Democrats in Maine support and as a guideline for elected officials in their political work.

A. Economic Security, Economic Opportunity, and Economic Justice

We support a democratic government that:

- Maintains the Democratic Party's strong record of fiscal responsibility in its historical stand in support of a new economic deal for all Americans and all Mainers.
- Upholds the right of all people to participate fairly in our economy and earn equitable rewards for their contributions.
- Reverses the 35-year trend of increasing economic inequality.
- Recommits itself to reconstructing the social safety net.

Economic Security in Maine means:

1. Jobs with livable wages for all who can work; a minimum wage high enough to raise workers out of poverty.
2. Safe, sanitary, affordable housing.
3. A health care system that protects all Mainers against the significant economic consequences of illness and injury.
4. Strong public Social Security and Maine Public Employees Retirement System programs with realistic cost of living adjustments; unemployment compensation; rigorous regulation of all pensions; and protection of workers' pension funds.
5. Public services provided without profit motive.
6. Protection from the repercussions of natural disaster including those induced by climate change.
7. A strong commitment to democratic control over economic regulation and consumer protection.
8. Strong opposition to agreements that cede our rights, our jobs, and our public health and safety to multinational corporate control. We support negotiating global fair-trade standards that support good jobs, and social standards that support a decent life for all people.
9. Promotion of Maine as a leader in organic farming, as well as sustainable and best practice farming and fishing, "farm/boat to table" initiatives, demonstrable policies to encourage and support fishermen and small farmers, and immigration into Maine of future farmers.

Economic Opportunity in Maine means:

10. Economic growth based on Maine's strengths and unique qualities via responsible sustainable practices that enhance Maine's brand, reputation and vitality.
11. Support for Maine-owned and operated businesses in all economic sectors and support for Maine entrepreneurs through innovation centers and business incubators.
12. Assurance that small businesses are not unfairly disadvantaged by public policies designed for large businesses.
13. Ensuring open and affordable statewide access to broadband and cellular technology, particularly in rural areas.

14. Active recruiting of high technology and biotechnology research laboratories and cutting edge manufacturing facilities.
15. Fair workplaces with all workers guaranteed the opportunity to organize unions, bargain collectively, and strike without replacement or reprisal.
16. Opposition to so-called “Right to Work” laws.
17. Regulations that support the existence of Maine’s small farms, fisheries, and other small businesses.
18. Support for increased capital, technical assistance, distribution systems and markets, especially for small and mid-sized farms.

Economic Justice in Maine means:

19. Workplaces free from health and safety hazards, discrimination, and harassment; respect for employees' family obligations, health, and other needs; and effective monitoring and enforcement of laws protecting workers.
20. An economy free from discrimination, including equal pay for equal work.
21. Support for those suffering hardship, including strong measures to fight root causes of poverty and homelessness.
22. Support for initiatives that would increase the number of worker-owned businesses in Maine.
23. Reinstitution of strong consumer protection, including protection from predatory practices in financial markets. We support fully implementing the Dodd-Frank Act and reinstating the Glass-Steagall provisions that separated commercial from investment banking and prevented banks from gambling with customer’s money.
24. Support for a financial transaction tax that will reduce risky and unproductive high-speed trading and other forms of Wall Street speculation.
25. Strengthening and expanding Social Security to make sure that everyone in this country can retire with the dignity and respect they deserve. We support eliminating the income cap on Social Security taxes and repealing the provisions that prevent public sector employees from collecting the Social Security benefits they earned from work in the private sector.
26. Giving priority to pension obligations at full value in corporate bankruptcy settlements.
27. Implementation of a “Fair Chance” job application process that prohibits denial of jobs to persons based on arrest or conviction records.

B. Health Care

We support a democratic government that:

1. Affirms health care as a fundamental human right and takes action to improve the health and wellness of all people by ensuring them access to quality and affordable health care. This goal is best achieved through the adoption of a universal, single-payer and non-profit health care system for Maine and the nation by extending Medicare to all.

2. Expands and improves the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA). We support transforming our healthcare system to a proactive/preventive model from its current reactive/curative model, which will significantly reduce healthcare costs, and provide world-class healthcare that will not be a financial burden on our citizens.
3. Supports nationally negotiated prescription drug pricing, in order to rein-in the accelerated drug price increases.
4. Establishes its own Maine-based exchange to better serve the health care needs of the people.
5. Ensures adequate access to health care resources for low-income individuals and families by using available Federal Medicaid program funding through PPACA to finance expansion of MaineCare eligibility.
6. Addresses the need for health services including mental health, vision, hearing, and dental care.
7. Strengthens all medical services in currently underserved regions.
8. Protects women's right to reproductive choice and full access to reproductive health services.
9. Guarantees access to health and reproductive resources regardless of gender identity or sexual preference.
10. Ensures a safe, secure, nutritious food supply, including comprehensive truth-in labeling requirements which include but are not limited to genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and country of origin.
11. Deals with the crisis in opioid and other drug abuse, including expansion of rehabilitation services.
12. Provides health care and community support that enables people with disabilities to live independently and work productively.
13. Addresses the crisis in elder care by fostering an age-friendly environment through increased access by the elderly to care, through development of strong training and support for care givers, and through continuing support for Social Security and Medicare.
14. Supports the right to informed individual choice in end of life care.
15. Respects the dignity of all individuals who may be impacted by mental illness and ensures to those individuals the same legal and societal rights as those who are not so impacted.

C. Education:

We support a democratic government that:

1. Guarantees an equitable, universal, quality public education system that spans early childhood through college and workforce training.
2. Strengthens the development and capacities of all children through quality preschool and childcare programs.
3. Ensures that all students can choose from multiple educational pathways that meet individual learning needs, and can graduate from high school prepared for college, career, and citizenship.
4. Ensures that all students have teachers who are well trained, equipped, and supported.

5. Guarantees that parents and guardians have opportunities and support needed to engage in their children's education.
6. Supports coordinated efforts to provide students and workers with the skills needed to match current and future private and public employer needs, so as to promote expansion of middle class job opportunities in Maine.
7. Holds our education system accountable for efficiently and effectively developing citizens who are well educated, well rounded, and capable of participating successfully in our economy and democracy.
8. Supports strategic investments in public universities, community colleges, apprenticeships, and other workforce training programs.
9. Addresses the high cost of higher education through policies that promote cost-effective operations and better need-based financial aid, while promoting and expanding programs that seek to keep the best and brightest college graduates in Maine.
10. Believes the state has a primary role in subsidizing the cost of higher education and should not diminish that responsibility with budget cuts that could lead to lower quality education and higher tuition costs.
11. Honors the 2003 citizen-mandated state budgetary commitment to pay 55% of all public school education costs.

D. Ethical Government and Democracy

We support a democratic government that:

1. Maintains the integrity of the U.S. and Maine Constitutions and laws by strengthening separation of powers and requiring executive, legislative, and judicial accountability.
2. Supports a state constitutional amendment that provides a procedure by which voters can remove a governor from office through a direct vote before his or her term has ended.
3. Promotes electoral reforms that result in officials elected by the majority of the voters and legislative bodies being truly representative of their constituencies, through the use of such reforms as ranked choice voting and nonpartisan redistricting processes.
4. Makes the process of electronic voting transparent and fraud-proof by putting all aspects of it under public control, including the use of open-source ballot-handling software and an effective auditing process.
5. Understands the importance of freedom of speech and the importance of the open exchange of ideas to a functioning democracy and a well-informed electorate; and, therefore refrains from censorship and control of the media, while supporting non-profit and publicly funded media sources to ensure expression of a broad range of ideas.
6. Calls for the people of the State of Maine and all branches and administrative divisions of state and local government to recognize and respect the sovereignty and self-determination of all Native American tribes located in the state.
7. Opposes the legal concept of corporate personhood as it is applied to participation in the political process.

8. Calls for constitutional or legislative steps to establish that, for political campaigns, money is not speech.
9. Ensures the continued integrity of the Maine Clean Elections Act through appropriate legislative action and adequate funding
10. Promotes reforms to reduce the influence of professional lobbyists and increase the public's ability to influence laws and rules.
11. Opposes contracting the jobs of public employees to private entities or profitmaking agencies.
12. Places a priority on negotiation, mediation, arbitration, reconciliation, restorative justice and restitution; and enables prevention, management, and peaceful resolution of conflict.
13. Supports an emphasis on rehabilitation and reform in the criminal justice system and the development of alternatives to incarceration, while refraining from unduly harsh and irreversible punishments, including the death penalty.
14. Understands drug abuse and addiction as a public health crisis and treats addicts as patients.
15. Makes needed public investments in and actively works with the Federal Government to develop Maine's transportation, energy and communication infrastructure.
16. Limits land taking by eminent domain to government entities, exclusively for projects directly benefiting the public and not for private gain.
17. Strengthens regulations to protect citizens and consumers.
18. Enacts fair compensation for state legislators and provides the tools and resources they need to perform their work.
19. Upholds a strong, clearly defined, transparently enforced code of ethics that holds legislators, the governor, and constitutional and statutory officers to a high standard of behavior while in office.
20. Supports an increase in the allowable number of terms for state legislators.
21. Supports the legalization of marijuana for adults 21 years and older while protecting minors from its use.
22. Promotes enforcement of laws and equal protection for men, women and children against domestic and sexual violence.

E. Freedom, Safety, and National Security

We support a democratic government that:

1. Cherishes our Constitutional and individual liberties and respects international law.
2. Protects the full enjoyment of the Constitution, especially its guarantees of free speech, free exercise of religion, separation of church and state, and freedom from all forms of discrimination.
3. Endorses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, including rights to food, water, shelter, health, and education.

4. Guarantees citizens' rights to privacy, rejects the unauthorized collection of personal data by private or public entities, and rejects spying on citizens without individual warrants.
5. Upholds habeas corpus for all people, rejects secret or indefinite detention, and provides detainees access to adequate and competent counsel and loved ones.
6. Supports responsible gun ownership in accordance with the 2nd amendment of the U.S. Constitution and works to strengthen background checks for every firearm sale or transfer within the State of Maine.
7. Does not conduct, aid, or condone torture.
8. Endorses the statewide and national expansion of broadband and the protection of an open internet with net neutrality.
9. Resolves to swiftly absolve those unjustly convicted and incarcerated.

F. Civil Rights

We support a democratic government that:

1. Promotes full participation of all persons in all of society's activities by, for example, enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act and bringing all public accommodations into full compliance, including state and federal facilities.
2. Promotes full constitutional equality for women and men as articulated in the new Equal Rights Amendment (H.J.Res.52 – 114th Congress) and endorses its passage and ratification, including Maine's power to enforce its provisions by appropriate legislation.
3. Applauds the work of the recent Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding the abuse of native people, especially children, and pledges to accomplish the recommendations coming from the work of the Commission.
4. Acknowledges and seeks to dismantle institutional racism in state systems and the public, and repairs the effects of historical trauma.
5. Promotes and enforces laws, including Affirmative Action and hate crimes laws, that protect civil rights; prohibits racial, ethnic, and religious profiling; guarantees equal access to education, employment, and housing; and prohibits discrimination based on race, color, real or perceived gender identity, age, physical and mental disability, religion, ancestry, national origin, or sexual or romantic orientation.
6. Respects the dignity of all immigrants, ensures their human rights, and offers a path to legal residence for long-term and otherwise law-abiding undocumented asylees, refugees and immigrants.
7. Extends to people of all marginalized orientations, gender identities and intersex statuses – such as LGBTQ people – all the same legal and social rights as their heterosexual, cisgender, and dyadic counterparts receive, and opposes all efforts to dismantle or limit these rights.

8. Opposes the use of state funds for travel to or official business with states that have laws limiting the civil rights of LGBTQ citizens.
9. Implements a transparent, equitable voting system where every vote counts, including write-ins, opposes policies that would suppress voter turnout and enforces laws against intimidating and coercing voters or restricting voter rights.
10. Protects employees against unfair and arbitrary dismissal by, at a minimum, creating a right to administrative due process.
11. Fairly and uniformly protects injured workers for the full term of their disability.
12. Opposes 'tort reform' that makes it more difficult for injured people to file a lawsuit and/or obtain a jury trial, and that places limits on the amount of money that can be received in a lawsuit.
13. Recognizes that it is a Civil Right to be protected from predatory economic speculation and predatory lending practices.

G. Environmental Protection

We support a democratic government that:

1. Recognizes its obligation to effectively protect our environment for the sustainable use of present and future generations by conserving and restoring our natural resources, our communities and our cultural resources, resulting in equitable economic growth and increased social equality.
2. Takes action and provides funding to reduce the risks of climate change while creating job opportunities by:
 - Implementing conservation measures
 - Developing renewable energy technologies
 - Supporting more sustainable farming practices
 - Building energy-efficient transportation systems
 - Improving standards for energy-efficient buildings
3. Applies the precautionary principle that those developing, manufacturing or selling products and technologies, and agencies approving them, are obligated to demonstrate their safety to public health and the environment.
4. Ensures access to clean, safe, public drinking and swimming waters, and protects surface waters and aquifers.
5. Actively works to restore and conserve the Gulf of Maine Marine Life Habitat and the communities dependent on the health of that ecosystem, given the threat posed to the continued viability of our fisheries by warming of the Gulf of Maine and increased acidification of its waters.

6. Leads the region in fighting airborne pollution; defines, limits, and monitors out-of-state waste; eliminates harmful waste and prohibits improper chemical disposal; enforces the state's "Solid Waste Hierarchy"; and promotes waste reduction, redemption, recycling, and composting.
7. Recognizes that Maine woodlands must be maintained as a sustainable resource for the foreseeable future and that they serve as an effective source of carbon sequestration; and that forest management best practices benefit not only the wood products industry, but also the communities dependent on the forests for jobs and recreation.
8. Opposes the proposed private, Maine East-West Corridor.

H. Global Peace, Security, and Justice

We support a democratic government that:

1. Leads by example and action to wage peace in the world; safeguards national security through peaceful solutions to international challenges; supports international law; works closely with allies; strengthens the United Nations; opposes subversion of democratically elected governments; acts to prevent genocide; and cooperates with the International Criminal Court.
2. Supports democratic reform and human rights, avoids support for oppressive regimes, and stands up against violations of international law throughout the world where armed perpetrators terrorize local populations.
3. Condemns the use of kidnapped children for fighting and sexual servitude.
4. Maintains an effective defense force that is equipped and organized to handle real foreign threats to vital U.S. interests and complemented by an intelligence service that protects the privacy of citizens, never launches undeclared or pre-emptive wars, minimizes use of private contractors, works to prevent civilian casualties, reduces the world arms trade, and eliminates weapons of mass destruction.
5. Expands citizen cultural and educational exchanges with all nations, and supports NGOs and universities in the developing world.
6. Prioritizes multilateral efforts to end terrorism and those situations of inequity and injustice that are the breeding grounds of terrorism.
7. Strives for peace and stability in the greater Middle East through renewed emphasis on diplomacy, economic and social development, human rights, and other actions, notably:
 - a. In Afghanistan, temporarily continuing U.S. combat operations to prevent Taliban and other terrorist forces from taking control and bringing back the terror, with a plan to end operations.
 - b. In Iraq, Syria, the Middle East and North Africa, cooperating with coalition forces to end the civil wars and to defeat ISIS (ISIL), Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.
 - c. In Iran, by giving full support to the Nuclear Action Plan against nuclear weapons, using the new relationship with Iran to limit its support for terrorism.
 - d. In Israel and Palestine, by supporting a mutually agreed upon two-state solution.
8. Welcomes the establishment of normal relations with Cuba.

9. Increases support for humanitarian assistance, refugees, disaster relief, international development, and the elimination of poverty.
10. Leads in shaping a global economy that supports a fairer distribution of growth and development among all peoples; respects indigenous leadership, trades, and resources; and protects the environment, labor rights (including right to a living wage), public health, and the public good.
11. Strengthens international financial mechanisms and regulation of international transactions and prevents currency and commodities manipulation.
12. Opposes the “fast track” process and current and future trade agreements, such as the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement in its present form, which put thousands of American jobs in jeopardy.
13. Supports and strengthens domestic jobs, businesses, and farms; eliminates all forms of government assistance for corporations that outsource jobs and business; and reforms existing trade agreements to include enforceable protections for workers, consumers rights, and a sustainable environment.
14. Supports the International Violence against Women Act and the ratification of the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women.

I. Veterans

We support a democratic government that:

1. Honors veterans and current military personnel by proactively providing all necessary support services to them and their families.
2. Works to have the Bureau of Veteran Services actively coordinate federal, state, and local resources, both public and private, with the commitment to end homelessness for veterans in Maine.
3. Supports expanding veterans' eligibility to enroll in the Veterans Administration health care, and expanding local and state efforts to help veterans adapt to civilian life with a commitment to prevent suicides among veterans in Maine.

J. Budget and Taxes

We support a democratic government that:

1. Uses the state budget to promote Maine’s sustainable economic growth, job creation, and equity in Maine.
2. Commits to fiscal responsibility through a balanced budget as required by the Maine State Constitution.
3. Implements a budget that reduces local government dependence on regressive property taxes by meeting the state legislative commitments to Maine communities of 5% revenue sharing and 55% state support for education funding.

4. Opposes extra-constitutional veto of legislation by defunding programs in the budget, for example, the Clean Elections Act.
5. Supports a fair, progressive tax system that pays for needed public services and focuses tax responsibilities on those most able to pay.
6. Is committed to reducing the property tax liability for individuals whose property tax payments represent a large portion of their family's income through mechanisms such as circuit breaker programs and income tax refunds.
7. Works to reform the fiscal balance in Maine based on the following principles:
 - a. A greater portion of the tax base be graduated and progressive income taxes.
 - b. All government pensions be exempt from the state income tax in the same manner as Social Security income.
 - c. Inheritance or estate taxes be made fair and appropriate.
 - d. A greater portion of the tax burden be placed on tourists and nonresidents.
 - e. Sales taxes are regressive and should play a smaller role in the fiscal system in Maine and should be low, broadly based on most goods and services, with exemptions for food and inexpensive clothing items, transparent and easy-to-collect but with as few special exemptions as possible.
 - f. Offers tax incentive programs that are carefully considered, limited in time, and only offered in exchange for clear commitments to job creation, with penalties for repayment for failure to meet commitments.
 - g. It is appropriate to impose higher taxes on products or activities that are associated with causing health and/or social costs such as alcohol, tobacco, carbonated and highly sweetened beverages, snacks high in sodium and carbohydrates, non-medical marijuana, and gambling.
8. In order to assure adequate funding for public safety without further burdening local property tax payers, the State must continue to provide funding to Maine's county jails at levels that had been agreed to previously by the Board of Corrections as appropriate.

Closing

We, as Democrats of Maine, support these principles and pledge to work cooperatively with local governments, other states, nations, and parties for a better future for all of Maine's people.