

2010 Albany County Democratic Platform
March 6, 2010

“We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this CONSTITUTION for the United States of America.”

- Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

This platform has been developed around three principles that Albany County Democrats believe capture the most important guidance for public policy and legislation in 2010:

Opportunity

Sustainability

Integrity

Recognizing the ease with which lofty concepts can be agreed upon, but set aside when it comes time to translate the abstract into the practical, we provide limited elaboration of each of these concepts as guidance to ourselves and our candidates, officers, and elected officials.

Opportunity

Albany County Democrats are committed to equal opportunity across our society. While government cannot and should not guarantee outcomes, we believe public policy should foster an economic, social, and institutional environment in which all individuals have the opportunity to pursue life, liberty, and happiness to the full extent of their abilities.

Employment. Opportunities for satisfying and justly-rewarded employment are basic to a stable and successful society. Quality job creation should be promoted by public development and maintenance of supporting infrastructure (transportation, communication, utilities), public services, and the recreational and cultural amenities that make our communities attractive places to live and do business.

We recognize the vital partnership between private and public sector employment in sustaining our increasingly complex economy. Just as public sector employment cannot exist without the revenue generated from the business community, the private sector cannot thrive without public infrastructure, education, research, legal systems, and community development.

We respect and recognize the right of workers to organize and collectively bargain to improve wages and working conditions. The diversification of the Wyoming economy from a resource-extraction emphasis to a broader and more stable base of employment must be pursued to stabilize the economy of the state and make Wyoming an attractive and rewarding option for our young people. Efforts to eliminate the wage gap between

men and women must be undertaken for basic fairness and to attract and retain families, women and girls in the state.

We support just distributions of the fruits of our labors and the burdens of our taxes through maintenance of a living wage and strongly progressive tax policies, encompassing all forms of income, to promote the prosperity of workers across the full spectrum of our economy.

Health Care. Universal basic health care is a necessity for the well being of individual citizens and the general, social, and economic welfare of the nation. The current, insurance-industry-based system has led to an inequitable availability of basic health care and costs disproportionate to health care outcomes. Employer-based health care is a poorly-distributed burden which compromises the competitiveness of participating employers and the economic mobility of employees. We favor moving as rapidly as possible toward a single payer system modeled on Medicare/Medicaid, paid for by conversion from premiums-based funding and cost-shifting, to payroll taxes and the general fund.

In the absence of the necessary federal policy, we applaud state-sponsored initiatives in meaningful health-care reform. We also support increased insurance coverage requirements for individual health insurance plans while improvements are being made to our current health care system. We encourage the state to begin placing health-care clinics in rural areas in each county.

We believe that health care for women should include access to the full range of reproductive health care options. We recognize the difficulty with which some segments of our society accept pregnancy terminations, and emphasize the importance of comprehensive sex education and pregnancy prevention services, and believe that a woman's fundamental right to choose must be maintained.

Education. We support investment in a strong and diverse educational system, including statewide funding and a commitment to development of the knowledge required for the full participation in the responsibilities of citizenship, productive human relations, and social and economic life. In particular, equal access to higher education must be maintained and supported. We recognize the importance of job training and retraining in our educational system, and emphasize that public resources should be applied to ensure general education as well. We support greater public funding of career and technical education in secondary and tertiary education.

Immigration. We recognize that illegal immigration has caused aberrations in the U.S. jobs market. This problem is founded importantly in the lack of opportunity in the home nations of immigrants. Our workers and employers have vital interests in our development of policies for trade, foreign aid, and international affairs that serve to broaden opportunities and stabilize economies abroad. Meanwhile, current laws

regarding employers and employees should be enforced as even handedly and humanely as possible. We support the focus of the Obama administration on enforcement of immigration laws that limit employer's hiring of illegal persons.

Sustainability

Albany County Democrats encourage a long-term vision for Wyoming, for America, and for the world. Our goal is the development of social, cultural, economic, and physical environments in which we and our descendants can enjoy the peace, freedom, and community that will nurture and sustain our quality of life.

Economy. In Wyoming, the “boom and bust” cycle of energy development places severe stress upon the infrastructure, services, housing, workforce and social coherence of our cities, towns, and counties. Mineral exploitation also threatens the open spaces, landscape, habitat, and natural beauties upon which agriculture, tourism, recreation, and our cultural character depend. We recognize that the energy industry contributes importantly to our tax base. Our long-term interests, both social and financial, would be best served by every effort to modulate the pace of development to stabilize the workforce, provide long-term employment for Wyoming citizens, encourage community development by lessening dependence on transient workers, and attenuate environmental and social impacts.

Energy Policy and Climate Change. The thrust of US energy policy has traditionally been on securing additional foreign and domestic supplies and the protection of nonrenewable energy industries. This is not sustainable in the long run. This has led to increasing pressure to develop domestic supplies in unsuitable environments, has corrupted the use of our military as an instrument of foreign policy and left us behind most developed nations in responses to climate change. It is critical that we develop a coherent, far-sighted national energy policy that emphasizes across-the-board reductions in demand through energy conservation and efficiency, innovation in energy resource development, implementing solutions to the building crisis in global climate impacts, and constructive engagement of our trading partners in developing nations to make serious efforts toward environmental protections and energy efficiencies. We support alternate energy sources that do not cause an adverse impact on the nation and world's food supply and prices, while maintaining long-term environmental standards.

Natural Resources. At the state and local level, we celebrate the importance of clean air, land, and water, open spaces, and Wyoming's abundant wildlife and world-class wilderness to our quality of life, now and in the future. We recognize that certain wildlife habitats and special places – mountain landscapes such as Rock Creek in the Medicine Bow National Forest, desert wilderness such as Adobe Town in the Red Desert – are too important to sacrifice to industrial use. Citizens and public officials at all levels should work to minimize industrial impacts to our environmental resources, using advanced

technologies and methods, working to ensure development occurs responsibly – in the right place and at the right pace.

War and Diplomacy. We strongly support the Obama administration’s efforts to adjust the global economic, political, and military environment in which US foreign policy is exercised by shifting our emphasis from instruments of military power and hegemony to efforts to engage problems through diplomatic initiatives. We must continue working to recognize and understand the legitimate interests of other nations -- their histories and cultures -- so as to engage problems in the spirit of searching for what we might do collectively to resolve them.

Integrity

Albany County Democrats recognize the basic integrity of constitutional government and public policy at all levels as the foundation upon which our society is built. All participants should be confident that the fundamental processes of election, appointment, legislation, administration, and enforcement are sound and faithfully adhered to.

Government. We recognize government – federal, state, and local -- as the collective agent of “we the people,” held to the same high standards of morality, equality, and honesty as we aspire to individually.

Rule of Law. We promote an unflinching dedication to the rule of law—the same law for everyone—including the founding principles of checks and balances and the separation of powers between the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, as mandated by the U.S. Constitution, and including the faithful execution of the laws, as written, by competent and objective executive-branch agencies.

We applaud the efforts by the present administration to re-establish a balanced relationship between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government.

We appeal to all elected representatives to embrace the long-term public welfare as their guiding vision rather than seeking short-term political victories.

Transparency and Money in Politics. We believe that the power of money can be a serious threat to the integrity of government. We decry the Supreme Court ruling that corporations are to be treated as “persons” with respect to First Amendment rights and urge Congress to enact constitutional limits on corporate financing of campaigns. We support full reporting of campaign contributions to be made public prior to elections, reasonable limits on campaign contributions, strict limits on gifts to office holders and staff, and full disclosure of formal connections with persons or entities with financial interests in legislation under consideration or in government decisions or actions, and full reporting by lobbyists of expenditures on behalf of their clients.

Civil Rights. We endorse the freedoms embodied in The Bill of Rights, recognizing that our desires for personal, financial, and national security do not trump our commitment to respect and protect the individual rights and privacy of our fellow citizens. We respect every person's right to enjoy the full benefits of marriage, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Foreign Affairs. We demand the same commitment to democracy, self-determination, open government, civil and human rights, and the rule of law (national and international) in our conduct of foreign affairs as we espouse at home.

Commendations

Albany County Democrats recognize the sacrifices our military personnel and their families make to secure the integrity, opportunity, and sustainability of these United States. We are grateful for their dedication and pledge ourselves to vigilance that their lives not be jeopardized needlessly.