

The Party Platform

The platform of the Democratic Party of Virginia was adopted by the delegates to the 2008 State Convention on June 14th. More than 40 resolutions were considered by the convention's resolutions committee. Language from resolutions adopted by the committee has been incorporated into this platform.

Virginia Democrats

BRINGING CHANGE TO WASHINGTON... THE VIRGINIA WAY

The Platform of the Democratic Party of Virginia

Statement of Common Purpose

The Democratic Party of Virginia is united in its efforts to elect Democratic leaders of character, integrity, ability, vision, and commitment to delivering results for Virginians. The Democratic Party of Virginia is the party that commits to delivering fiscal responsibility, ensuring excellence in education, reinvesting in our infrastructure, preserving a social safety network, providing accessible healthcare and creating economic opportunity for all Virginians. We are dedicated to protecting our inalienable rights and constitutional freedoms that provide us the opportunity to improve the lives of others. We will work to elect leaders that will provide change through leadership that is both commonsense and results - oriented. As Democrats we know there is more that unites us rather than divides us. Working together, we make this Commonwealth and nation a stronger and better place for all.

Our Core Values

RESTORING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR VIRGINIA'S FAMILIES

We believe the most effective way to restore economic security for our families is to deliver high quality, good paying jobs and protect home ownership. We support the continued creation of a business climate characterized by a skilled, well-educated workforce, equitable tax policies, access to affordable, reliable, environmentally sustainable energy, and well-planned transportation and infrastructure. We support targeted investment efforts to promote economic development projects in Virginia's inner cities and its rural areas. We commend Governor Kaine for his ongoing efforts to strengthen Virginia's economy by advancing early education, investing in K-12 and higher education, and improving our infrastructure to attract new business to the Commonwealth. We support job creation through promoting tourism to Virginia's natural attractions, historic sites, museums and cultural attractions.

Protecting Homeowners

We support public policy that cracks down on fraudulent mortgage brokers and lenders, and provides full and accurate loan disclosure to homebuyers. We support higher standards of accountability for the subprime mortgage industry to protect consumers from abusive lending practices. We encourage public education that provides homebuyers with an accurate lending standard with which to make well-informed mortgage choices. We support efforts to protect homeowners currently struggling under the threat of foreclosure due to unscrupulous lending practices.

Protecting Workers

We support workers throughout our Commonwealth. From the miner in the southwest to the government employee in the north, we desire a prosperous economy that allows all Virginians to flourish. We support the right of workers to form bargaining units and believe in the principle of equal pay for equal work.

Support for Small Businesses and Entrepreneurship

We support small businesses and entrepreneurs and recognize the importance of women and minority-owned businesses in Virginia. We commend Governor's Kaine's progress in increasing state government contract procurement for small, minority, and women-owned businesses and support his continuing efforts. We are dedicated to helping as many Virginians as possible attain the American dream of owning their own business through our support of a vibrant, enterprising climate. We support policies that allow small businesses to bid on federal contracts, a process which has been unfairly undermined by the current federal administration.

Improving Trade Policies

We support fair trade policies that strengthen our economy, create more American jobs, and include enforceable workers' rights and environmental standards. We support the enactment of laws that penalize companies that incorporate overseas to avoid taxes and laws that deny government contracts to those companies. We support the manufacturing economy in Virginia. We support the strengthening of our country's manufacturing base for national defense and homeland security through procurement reform and enhanced "Buy America" requirements. We support updating the assessment of critical defense manufacturing capabilities and providing a plan to improve America's infrastructure.

Support for Training and Re-training

We support efforts to build and retain a qualified workforce through increased training opportunities, a commitment to career and technical education, and a strong community college system. We recognize the importance of a strong, high-quality education system, from pre-kindergarten through higher education, to economic development efforts, and we support continued investments in education to sustain economic development. We support quality training opportunities for people with disabilities, so they can acquire the skills they need to live independent, productive lives. We support continuing the progress made in moving people from welfare to work by strengthening child support enforcement, ensuring the availability of quality childcare, and expanding health care coverage.

ENSURING AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

We support policies that ensure quality, affordable health care for all Virginians. Every Virginian has a right to quality health care. We commend Governor Kaine for expanding access to health care, through Medicaid expansions, innovative public-private partnerships, and record investments in mental health. We commend former Gov. Mark Warner for enrolling over 100,000 children in the FAMIS (Family Access to Medical Insurance Security) initiative, which helps working Virginia families get health care for their children. We affirm our support for programs that seek to provide access to health care for all Virginians; that focus on prevention; that recognize hard-working, lower-income citizens need assistance with the costs of health care; and that seek to help the elderly and persons with disabilities of all ages live as independently as possible.

Support for Expanding Help to the Poor and Uninsured

We support measures that expand eligibility requirements for state Medicaid and SCHIP programs so that health care benefits will be available to additional needy Virginians, including children, pregnant women, and other adults. We support increasing the number of elderly and disabled Medicaid waiver slots in order to achieve a level of service comparable to the nationwide average.

Support for Affordable Access to Prescription Drugs

We affirm our belief that access to prescription medication is critical to adequate health care and that rapidly increasing prices of prescription drugs places a heavy burden on older Virginians, particularly those on fixed incomes. We support efforts to provide true prescription assistance to senior citizens.

Protecting Social Security

We support efforts that ensure Social Security is solvent and viable for Virginians now and in the future.

PRESERVING VIRGINIA'S WORLD-CLASS PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

We believe that education is the key to opportunity. Under the leadership of Gov. Tim Kaine and former Gov. Mark Warner, Virginia has been named the state in which children have the best opportunities for success. Virginia's system for lifetime education, from early childhood through adulthood, is one of our most valuable assets, preparing our children to become responsible adults and citizens, and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to compete in the new economy.

Fulfilling the Promise of No Child Left Behind

*We believe that supporting our schools is more than just a sound bite. Virginia has been a leader in setting high standards for our schools, teachers, and students. Virginia should not have to change its existing system of high standards to meet an inflexible, unfunded federal mandate. We believe that the *No Child Left Behind Act* should be reformed to improve assessments that truly measure student's progress and their readiness for college and the workplace.*

Support for Job Training and Continuing Education

We support job training and continuing education programs that provide the skills adults need to compete for jobs in the global economy. We encourage assistance for technology-oriented adult learning classes to help provide citizens access to the high-tech career markets in Virginia. We believe in building on the success of the Warner and Kaine administrations by expanding affordable broadband Internet access to every home and public library, computer center and school in rural Virginia in hopes of closing the digital divide.

Support for Teachers

We support Virginia's dedicated schoolteachers who are underpaid and overworked. We acknowledge the ongoing shortage of qualified teachers and recognize that public schools increasingly face competition from the private sector in attracting and retaining skilled employees. We believe that teachers should be treated as professionals and compensated fairly. In order to recruit and retain the best teachers, we support increasing teacher salaries to reach and exceed the national average.

Meeting Funding Responsibilities

We support and encourage efforts to provide more state funding for school construction, renovation and reduction in class sizes. We are committed to genuine full funding of the needs of our public schools, and we oppose attempts take money away from our students and teachers through budget maneuvers and formula gimmicks. We oppose school vouchers and other tax credit programs for parochial and private schools. We support innovative approaches in education, including promotion of public school choice and good use of education technology.

Support for a Well-Rounded Curriculum

We recognize that a well-rounded curriculum must include teaching good values, the responsibilities of citizenship and family life education. We believe in order to compete in the global economy our nation must recognize that math and science education must be a national priority. We believe that fine arts and physical education in addition to academic studies should be taught in our schools. We celebrate diversity in education, knowing that exposure to different cultures enhances character and reduces the development of prejudices.

Support for Early Childhood Education

We recognize the many economic, educational, and social benefits of early childhood education and support expanding access to high-quality pre-kindergarten for Virginia's children. We commend Gov. Kaine's efforts to expand the Virginia Preschool Initiative. We support policies that seek to provide high-quality, universally accessible pre-kindergarten programs for all of Virginia's four-year-olds. We recognize the benefits of early childhood programs that support parents and encourage their children's continued development.

Support Full Funding for Higher Education

We strongly support Virginia's world-class institutions of higher education. We support adequately funded and affordable higher education. We support a comprehensive state effort to

advance Virginia's research institutions. We recognize that Virginia's students deserve the very best faculty possible in classrooms and laboratories and we must ensure that those professors are properly compensated. We support the efforts of immigrant families to send their children to Virginia's institutions of higher learning, so that the students will become productive citizens and part of the workforce of tomorrow. We support measures that afford to students fair and equal access to Virginia colleges and universities.

PRESERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

We believe that we can both protect the environment and expand the economy. We believe all Virginians should be able to enjoy Virginia's natural heritage. We should be assured that the air we breathe is pure, the water we drink is clean, and the land we live on is safe from environmental hazard. We recognize that achieving substantial independence from imported oil is a national security imperative, and that we need to bring a transformative change to our national energy policy. We acknowledge our sacred obligation to protect the earth and preserve our quality of life for future generations.

Support for Tackling the Threats of Climate Change

We support policy measures that will effectively and immediately address climate change. We encourage incentives for individuals and businesses to implement energy efficiency. We support increased research and investment in green technologies to foster alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, and geothermal, which can create millions of new jobs in America.

Support for a New Energy Policy

We support the need to bring transformative change to our national energy policy. We need a fresh approach that invests in renewable energy and eliminates our dependence on foreign oil. By making new investments, we can create millions of new world-class jobs here at home and make our nation more secure. We believe a new energy policy will also help us address climate change, letting us reassert America's moral standing in the world.

Support for Access to Safe Drinking Water

We support efforts to develop a comprehensive statewide water strategy to ensure access to affordable clean drinking water for all Virginians. Thousands of Virginia homes still lack adequate plumbing. Some older urban water systems are in need of upgrades, and parts of the Commonwealth struggle to acquire a sufficient water supply. We support smart, environmentally friendly water supply planning and we support investing in the necessary infrastructure to provide all Virginians access to clean, safe drinking water.

Support for Clean Rivers, Streams, and the Chesapeake Bay

We support efforts to restore the quality of the waters in the Commonwealth with meaningful tributary strategies, reduction of the number of nutrients entering our waters in excessive amounts from non-point sources or specific facilities, and protection of non-tidal wetlands. We support the vigorous pursuit of the goals of the 2000 Chesapeake Bay Agreement and its promise of improvement in this significant natural resource.

Support for Preserving Open Space

We support efforts to preserve Virginia's natural resources, which are important to Virginia's economic future and our quality of life as citizens. We support significant and reliable funding for open space and land conservation initiatives. We support innovative programs that encourage the preservation of farmland for agricultural use. We support state and local efforts to encourage appropriate development by providing necessary information and technical assistance as well as efforts to limit suburban sprawl.

Support for Outdoor Activities

We recognize that hunting, fishing and other outdoor recreational activities are essential components of the Virginia lifestyle. We believe that the opportunity for Virginia families to enjoy nature's bounty is an important part of our heritage. We support the public ownership of fish and wildlife, and the streams and rivers of our Commonwealth, and believe that the Commonwealth holds these resources in trust for the beneficial use of its citizens.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY & COMMUNITY

The Democratic Party of Virginia welcomes people from all walks of life, from all regions of the world, of all ages, races, religions, and sexual orientations. We respect the right of privacy and believe that the intimate details of adult lives and relationships should not be the subject of government regulation. We respect and value gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Virginians and support their efforts for equal treatment under the law. We embrace new Virginians because we are a nation of immigrants and descendants of immigrants who have enriched our society and have made significant contributions to our culture and character. We welcome our new citizens and the ethnic diversity that they bring to our party and our country.

Affirmation of Equal Rights for Women, Civil Rights for All

We affirm our support for equal rights for women, including the right to reproductive choice free from government interference. We support policies that eliminate pay disparities for equal work, punish discrimination and harassment in the workplace, and ensure gender equality including the passage of an Equal Rights Amendment. We support the strengthening of federal hate crimes legislation, expanding hate crimes protection by passing the Matthew Shepard Act. We affirm our historic commitment to civil rights and honor those Virginians, such as former Governor Doug Wilder, Oliver Hill and State Senator Henry Marsh of Richmond, who made the dream a reality. We support a meaningful level of criminal defense services that assures that all eligible indigent defendants receive effective and meaningful legal representation.

Faith in Action

We support religious freedom and the right of all people to worship as they please. We believe that what unites us is much greater than what divides us, and that our trust in the common good is the way to honor our sacred beliefs. While partisan rhetoric seeks to separate, we Democrats believe strongly in our faith and are guided by our values. We believe that faith extends to addressing poverty, being good stewards of our environment, and making sure all Americans have health care. We remain committed to working with faith communities to organize around our shared goals.

Support for People with Disabilities

We honor people with disabilities and support their goals of attaining equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living and economic self-sufficiency. We support the fundamental principles of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Olmstead* decision, which held that the Americans with Disabilities Act means that states must provide services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities.

Opposition to Discrimination

We continue to oppose the Marriage Amendment written into the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia. We object to a measure that unconstitutionally infringes upon the civil rights of citizens of Virginia on the basis of sexual orientation.

Support for Domestic Partnership Benefits

We support allowing all Virginians to have access to affordable health care, health insurance and equal opportunities for housing and home loans. We support private employers' right to extend health benefits to additional household members if they choose to do so. We support allowing local governments the same right. We support eliminating legal barriers to home loans and home ownership.

ENSURING FAIR ELECTIONS

We support a statewide primary method of nominating statewide candidates. We affirm our belief that primaries afford the maximum opportunity for participation by voters and strengthen our candidates by providing them with valuable campaign experience.

Support for Redistricting Reform

We support legislative redistricting that is fair to all citizens, that follows logical geographical and jurisdictional boundaries, and that strives to keep communities of interest intact. We support the creation of an independent, bipartisan commission for the redistricting of legislative boundaries.

Support for Ex-Felons' Rights to Vote

We support the repeal of state laws that effectively disenfranchise ex-felons who have fully completed their sentences and any other obligations, thus making them equal citizens of the Commonwealth again. We commend Governor Tim Kaine and former Gov. Mark Warner for their dedication to democratic government and human rights as shown by their efforts to facilitate the restoration of the right to vote.

Support for Consecutive Gubernatorial Terms

We support an amendment to the Virginia constitution to remove the prohibition against a Governor serving consecutive terms.

KEEPING CITIZENS SAFE AND SECURE

We believe that keeping Virginia's citizens safe and secure, both at home and abroad, is one of the most vital functions of government. We unequivocally support our police officers, state troopers, sheriff's deputies, firefighters, first responders and the men and women in all U.S. military branches who keep us safe. We support full funding for the tools they need to do their jobs, and for the wages and benefits that allow them and their families to enjoy a good quality of life in Virginia.

Support for Our Troops

We support both our troops and the families they have left behind, here in Virginia and across our country. We commend the leadership and vision of Sen. Jim Webb and Congressman Bobby Scott for their tireless efforts to secure educational funding for the men and women who have risked their lives in the fight against terrorism. We encourage our leaders to work towards the stated goal of building a stable and democratic Iraq by engaging all constituency groups in a swift transition of power and the use of the framework of the United Nations and its allies to devise a sound and timely exit strategy for U.S. and other coalition armed forces from Iraq, thereby ending our military engagement there.

Support the Right to Bear Arms

We support the right to keep and bear arms as defined in the Virginia and U.S. Constitutions. We continue to support common-sense firearms safety legislation, including background checks at gun shows and with private sellers to ensure that buyers are not terrorists, convicted felons, under a court order, or deemed dangerous to themselves or society.

Support Fighting Terrorism

We affirm efforts to defend our nation and our Commonwealth against terrorism and affirm that national security can, and should, be undertaken so as to preserve the civil rights and liberties of the residents of the Commonwealth. We voice our profound concerns regarding the effect of the U.S. Patriot Act on civil rights and liberties and encourage our members of Congress to review the act and support measures to modify the statute so as to not undermine the fundamental rights and liberties guaranteed by the constitutions of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States. We call upon the Commonwealth of Virginia, its agencies, officials and employees to continue to respect all residents' freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly, and the right to privacy, in keeping with Virginia's distinguished history of first defining and then protecting the human rights of all citizens of the Commonwealth. We support adherence to international standards defining torture.

FINDING SOLUTIONS TO TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

We acknowledge that traffic and congestion impact Virginia's growing economy and Virginians' quality of life. We commend Governor Tim Kaine's efforts to find solutions to the state's transportation needs and for calling a Special Session of the legislature in June 2008 to address this important issue. We recognize that state leaders need to do more to meet the state's current and future infrastructure needs, including the provision of long range planning and a stable, long-term, significant stream of revenue dedicated to transportation projects.

Encourage Use of Alternative Modes of Transit

We recognize that Virginia needs to increase investments in alternative modes of transportation such as rail and public transportation, telecommuting, car and vanpooling, and other forms of ridesharing, and encourage commuter use of these alternatives. We acknowledge that as the price of gasoline continues to rise, public transit is even more important than ever in ensuring that all Virginians are able to move freely to work and play. We support policies that make adequate investments to expand mass transit and encourage alternate forms of transportation, including development of walkable and bikeable communities.

Support Responsible Growth

We believe Virginia should adopt smart growth concepts to guide land-use planning and development. We commend Governor Kaine for groundbreaking initiatives to connect land-use and transportation planning. We recognize the multiple benefits of smart land use policies in reducing traffic, maintaining open space, reducing pollution, and encouraging exercise through livable communities. We support traffic impact statements to provide better information to local decision makers when they consider rezoning requests. We support access management standards to allow the roads we have invested in to continue to function well. We support connectivity standards that create a strong network of streets to move people efficiently. We support innovative land use policies because we recognize that we cannot simply build our way out of traffic congestion.