

Democratic Party of Georgia
Platform

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Summary Statement

Georgia Democrats believe every child in every classroom in every school in every county in Georgia should have access to a high quality public education.

Georgia Democrats believe access to quality, affordable healthcare is a basic, human right.

Georgia Democrats believe we have a moral obligation to leave our children and grandchildren with an earth as safe, beautiful, and majestic as the one bequeathed to us by our parents and grandparents.

Georgia Democrats believe in and uphold every citizen's right to equal and impartial justice under the law. We are firmly committed to upholding and protecting the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Georgia. We believe that all Georgians are equal in the eyes of God and should all be equal in the eyes of the law.

Georgia Democrats believe that the American Dream of opportunity for all should guide government policies at all levels.

Preamble

What is a Georgia Democrat?

We believe...

We are all equal in the eyes of God, and we should all be equal in the eyes of the law. The most fundamental value that should guide both our private lives and public policy is the Golden Rule, to do unto others as we would have others do unto us, and to lead with compassion and empathy, not with hatred and division. Being American means that everyone, regardless of how humble their origins or the color of their skin, should have a place at the table, because ultimately we are one family and one community. Whether a person is white, black, brown, male, or female, they should earn the same pay for the same job. No one should be discriminated against in the workplace because of their sex, race, color, or sexual orientation. The middle class is the backbone of this country, and our leaders should pay more attention to the interests of the middle class and those who aspire through hard work to become middle class. And for people who are born into poverty, the role of government should be to build a bridge to independence, not future dependence, to give them a hand up, not a handout.

The first and most important job of government is to keep us safe. Supporting our troops means sending them to war only when we have no other option, taking good care of them and their families for their service and sacrifice, taking good care of them if they come home injured, and taking good care of the families of those who give their lives in service to our country.

Our government should be just big enough to keep us safe and invest in the things that allow every Georgian to live a happy and healthy life, like good schools, cops on the street, health care, and an infrastructure that makes Georgia a good place to do business. Government should partner with business, not hamper it, particularly small business, because business is the key to our prosperity and jobs. Politicians should work for the people who elected them, not for large corporations and lobbyists. They should pass health care laws that benefit our families, not insurance and drug companies, and pass energy bills that cut the price at the pump, not line the pockets of big oil companies. Government should work for people who work for a living. It should make sure we have fair trade, not free trade, to guarantee a fair wage for a hard day's work, keep jobs and factories here in Georgia, and protect our pensions and retirements. Our government should be open, honest, and accountable, so that people know what they're getting and know whom to get rid of if they don't get the kind of government they deserve.

The best investment in our country and our children is a good education. The best way to keep jobs in Georgia is to educate our children well, and to make sure our colleges, universities, and technical schools coordinate with business and government to ensure that graduates are prepared for jobs in an increasingly global economy.

Every family in Georgia deserves a family doctor. People who work hard for a living and play by the rules should be able to take their kids to a doctor when they're sick, and no Georgia family should go without health insurance even if they have a

preexisting condition. Any changes we make in health care should give people more choices, not less, including the choice to stay with the doctor they have now. Providers, industry leaders, policymakers, and the general public must join together to bring about necessary, fundamental reform and restructuring.

Stewarding and protecting the earth is our sacred responsibility. We have a moral obligation to leave our children and grandchildren with an earth as safe, beautiful, and majestic as the one our parents and grandparents left to us. We should be able to eat the fish in our streams; know that the water our children drink and the food they eat are safe; and not have to travel hours from our homes to hunt, fish, hike, or watch wildlife.

Our values are guided by our faith, but government has no business imposing the teachings of anyone's particular religious beliefs on other people, and forcing one person to live by another person's faith. You don't have to be a person of a particular faith to be a good American; you just have to be a person of good faith, who tries to lead a good and decent life.

Perhaps most importantly, we should honor our great traditions, the most fundamental of which is to leave a better world for our children than the one we inherited from our parents, with ever more prosperity, freedom, happiness, security, and hope.

That is what it means to be a Georgia Democrat.

I. JUSTICE

Georgia Democrats affirm that everyone is equal in the eyes of God and should all be equal in the eyes of the law. We are firmly committed to upholding and protecting the U.S. Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Georgia. We assert and uphold every citizen's right to equal and impartial justice under the law, as guaranteed by the fundamental principles on which our nation was founded as stated by our party's founder, Thomas Jefferson, in the Declaration of Independence. We believe that everyone is endowed by the Creator with certain basic rights. Among these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We believe that the role of government is to secure these rights and that the authority of government comes from the people.

We believe that life and liberty are equally important and that there are areas of personal privacy and freedom into which government intrusion should be limited. These areas include personal decisions about one's health, religious beliefs, intimate personal relationships and family life. Laws should be crafted to benefit the common good without unduly restricting individual liberty. Care must be exercised by government to protect the rights of minorities and the integrity of the democratic process. The system of checks and balances is essential to restore the balance in government and protect our liberty.

We believe that all Georgians have the right to their own individual pursuit of happiness within an orderly society. Because we value religion and because many of us are people of faith, we believe government has no authority to impose religious beliefs on its citizens and is prohibited from doing so by the First Amendment. Furthermore, government has the responsibility to protect all its citizens from discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical disability or mental disability.

In support of this Justice Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Affirm that the powers of government are derived from the governed. To forestall the abuse of these powers, the Constitution divided the government into three independent and equal branches, the Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial branches, to serve as checks and balances. It is absolutely essential that these branches remain independent and that they maintain their powers equally.

Recognize that Liberty cannot survive without fair, impartial Justice.

Support restoring citizenship and voting privileges to convicted citizens who served their sentences and are now law-abiding citizens.

Believe that laws are to be crafted to benefit the common good of society without unduly restricting individual freedom. Care must be exercised to maintain the rights of minorities in order to avoid what the Founding Fathers called the tyranny of the majority. Laws enacted by the Legislative Branch are to be administered fairly, impartially, and in accord with the letter and spirit of each law. Laws may not be subverted by the Executive Branch by expanding or diminishing them by selective application. Government should observe the right of habeas corpus. All citizens have the right to know the charges against them, and they are entitled to due process, to a speedy trial and to be represented by counsel regardless of their ability to pay. We also support the Constitutional requirement of adequate funding for the justice system.

Oppose laws which force on everyone the views and values of a particular religion in blatant disregard for the First Amendment right to religious freedom.

Advocate legislative review of federal “faith-based initiatives.”

Support hate crime legislation to increase criminal penalties for acts of violence or intimidation committed because of a victim's race, color, ancestry, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, gender, or disability.

Support federal and Georgia state legislation to remove unfair restrictions on workers to organize unions in the workplace. Freedom to associate for gaining improved economic and legal security in the workplace is vital for workers. We support “The Employee Free Choice Act.” We support enforcement of existing labor laws that protect workers.

Believe the United States should rejoin the community of nations as a respected member in good standing by adhering to international treaties and the Geneva Conventions.

Support legislation that advances workplace equality to ensure that all Georgians have the opportunity to live the American Dream.

II. NATIONAL SECURITY

A fundamental role of government is to provide for the national security. We support the courageous men and women in the armed forces who protect our country. Supporting our armed forces means sending them to war only when we have no other option and taking good care of them and their families in recognition of their service and sacrifice. However, when force is necessary, we believe we should be both bold and smart in how we deploy our forces to ensure success in protecting our national interests. Such strategies must include plans for disengagement, peaceful resolution to international conflicts and sound foreign policy. As President Kennedy said, “Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.”

In support of this National Security Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Believe that it is our responsibility to protect the citizens of the State of Georgia from terrorists, both domestic and foreign, and that the efforts to do just that should be supported politically and financially.

Are committed to equal treatment of all service members and believe all patriotic Georgians should be allowed to serve our country without discrimination, persecution or violence.

Believe that protecting Georgia's critical infrastructure is paramount for maintaining not only our state's security but also our country's security.

Believe that those wishing to enter the United States legally, and be productive members of our communities, should be allowed to do so. We support measures to monitor those wishing to gain access to this country and efforts to ensure that those crossing our borders are not threats to our nation's security. We support allowing immigrants to attain legal alien status or citizenship in numbers necessary to support this nation's economy and the economy of the State of Georgia.

Believe that efforts to eliminate the distribution and use of illegal drugs will be more successful if our borders are made secure.

III. ECONOMIC SECURITY

The American Dream of opportunity for all should guide government policies at all levels. An efficient, responsive and results-oriented government can facilitate economic success and security for those willing to work hard and play by the rules. As Georgia, along with the rest of the country, moves into a global, information-based economy, we need leaders whose top priority is a thriving economy underpinned by investments in the state's workforce, environmental technologies, and smarter development.

In support of this Economic Security Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Affirm that workers should have a strong voice on the job and thus support their right to organize and bargain collectively to improve wages, benefits and working conditions. Workplaces should be safe and healthy environments.

Support free enterprise and the power of market forces, moderated by respect for workers and the environment.

Support equal opportunity and non-discrimination in the workplace.

Affirm the importance of a strong work ethic. Government policies should make work more valuable than welfare.

Support strong initiatives such as a livable wage, the earned income tax credit, access to childcare and other transitional services necessary to end the cycle of poverty.

Support a just and equitable tax system in which everyone accepts their personal responsibility for the common good.

Affirm that home ownership is a key to building wealth. We support fair lending practices and condemn predatory lending practices.

Support keeping the promise of providing strong Social Security and Medicare benefits for those who have worked and contributed to the system all of their lives.

Affirm the critical importance of agriculture to the Georgia economy and support the inherent value of the family farm.

IV. EDUCATION

Georgia Democrats believe good schools benefit the entire community. We want every child in Georgia to have the education necessary to succeed in today's world. We believe every child in Georgia should have access to a high quality public education for the 21st century. Students should be educated by qualified teachers with the aid of modern technology in a well-maintained school facility. Good schools benefit everyone and are crucial to a strong economy and thriving communities. We affirm the critical role of educators and believe teachers should be treated with the respect they deserve.

In support of this Education Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Support the full funding of public education in Georgia.

Support accountability for our schools. Teachers and others directly involved in education must have a major say in needed improvements.

Affirm the authority of local school boards and communities.

Support the expansion of early childhood education.

Support fine arts and physical education in our school curriculum.

Support ensuring that public education funds are used only for public education.

Support choice in alternative programming such as magnets and charter schools only when choice is the responsibility of the local boards of education – choice should not be mandated by state or federal legislation and should meet the same accountability requirements as regular school programs.

Support improving graduation rates through greater rigor and more alternative settings both for students entering college and those entering the work force.

Oppose replacing local property taxes for education with a sales tax.

Support a balanced and adequate framework for financing public education.

V. HEALTH CARE

We believe that access to quality, affordable healthcare is a basic, human right. Every American should be able to see their family doctor when they are sick, but many cannot. While healthcare costs continue to rise, more than 1.6 million Georgians are uninsured, and many more are under-insured. Our healthcare system is in a state of crisis. Providers, industry leaders, policymakers, and the general public must join together to bring about necessary, fundamental reform and restructuring.

Affordable, quality healthcare is essential to a productive and successful workforce, good schools and a strong society.

To improve individual health and well-being of Georgians, in support of this Health Care Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Support individuals, families, children, and senior citizens in making their own health care decisions.

Urge the full funding of PeachCare so that all Georgia children will have access to health insurance.

Support providing incentives for consumers and health care providers to become more cost efficient in exercising health care options.

Encourage consumer responsibility for health and wellness, self-care and informed decision-making.

Support working families with access to quality, affordable healthcare.

Support enhancement of consumer access to health and wellness services in their local communities.

Encourage the design of services that will assist vulnerable populations who have limited access to the U.S. health care system.

Support the development of early, targeted interventions for special needs populations.

Support the development of defined health and wellness standard plans that offer a package of services.

Support the development of effective, research-based, outcome-driven health and wellness policies.

Support the elimination of unnecessary bureaucratic controls and procedures.

Support embryonic stem cell research.

VI. ENVIRONMENT

Stewarding and protecting the earth is our sacred responsibility. We have a moral obligation to leave our children and grandchildren with an earth as safe, beautiful and majestic as the one bequeathed to us by our parents and grandparents. We should be able to eat the fish in our streams, know that the water our children drink and the food they eat are safe, and not have to travel hours from our homes to hunt, fish, hike, or watch wildlife.

In support of this Environmental Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Support the Endangered Species Act.

Encourage conservation and innovation to promote efficient use of our natural resources.

Affirm the right of every Georgia citizen to clean, safe, air and water.

Support ratification of the Kyoto Treaty.

Support the transition to renewable energy, freeing us environmentally and economically from fossil fuels, spurring responsible business development in that direction.

Support the preservation of public lands and wildlife areas, such as Jekyll Island, Oaky Woods, Chattahoochee River, and Cohutta Wilderness Area.

Support responsible allocation of existing water resources, and pursuit of extending our water resources through other means such as construction of new reservoirs.

Support the protection of the environment by encouraging common sense growth in areas that can sustain the growth, while maintaining a balance between good stewardship of the earth and good business.

VII. TECHNOLOGY

Georgia Democrats, in order to promote vigorous free speech, a vibrant business community, and unfettered access to all information on the Internet, support policies to preserve an open, neutral and interconnected Internet. Georgia Democrats strongly agree with recent rulings by the Federal Election Commission that political communications, including blogging, which take place independent of a political party, committee or candidate, receive a media exemption from campaign finance regulations. We affirm our support of the right to free speech as expressed in the First Amendment, including the right to critique any elected official or comment on any and all public policy, whether during war or peace, without fear of reprisal.

In support of this Technology Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Support protections against any degradation or blocking of access to any websites or content in the Internet to which access is legal and guaranteed by the Constitution.

Ensure that consumers have the right to free e-mail and that any and all communications will be protected from warrantless search and seizure as guaranteed by the Constitution.

Encourage build-out of high speed networks to all homes and businesses so that everyone, especially rural and underserved areas, can access content of their choice and upload or download what they want on the Internet as a public utility maintained by union workers.

Support ownership limits on private sector mass media to encourage and provide more cultural diversity, while protecting the openness, accessibility and integrity and the Internet as a public media resource for all Americans, regardless of income.

VIII. PUBLIC SAFETY

Georgia Democrats support a criminal justice system that is fair and efficient, ensures justice for victims of crime and is consistent with the values that make this country great.

In support of this Public Safety Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Affirm that the smooth and efficient operation of our court system is necessary for the administration of justice. It is our responsibility to support court operations, both financially and politically, to ensure the fair and equal treatment of those coming before the court.

Affirm that all our citizens have the right to safety and security and the efforts to protect this right is one of the main functions of state and local governments.

Support adequate funding for prisons and jails with an emphasis on reducing recidivism through proper rehabilitation programs, including education and training.

Affirm that illegal drugs and gangs pose an imminent threat to our communities and that state and local governments should take decisive action to prevent substance abuse, treat addiction and enforce existing laws.

IX. INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT

Georgia Democrats believe that it is a privilege to serve in elected office, and all who serve should be held to the highest ethical standards. Government derives its power not from the special interests or from major campaign contributors, but from the people. We insist on fairness, openness and integrity in our government and a fair and trustworthy election process.

In support of this Integrity in Government Platform, Georgia Democrats:

Support open government, public access to public business and oppose backroom, secret deals.

Deplore the pervasive influence of money in governmental processes and call for effective limits on expenditures for lobbying purposes.

Oppose those over-zealous restrictions that impede the legislative process and effectively disenfranchise voters.

Support an open, verifiable voting system with maximum participation by Georgia voters.