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# CALIFORNIA DEMOCRATIC PARTY

SENATOR ART TORRES (RET.), CHAIRMAN

# 2008 PLATFORM

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Adopted At The Democratic Party State Convention  
San Jose Convention Center  
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## **California Democrats Present Our Blueprint for the Golden State**

America's strength derives from people coming together and working for the common good. We believe in a strong economy that increases political, social, and cultural opportunity. We believe in inclusion and equality so that all can reach their fullest human potential. We are committed to upholding our Federal and State Constitutions, protecting and defending ourselves and our civil liberties, and ensuring justice, freedom, and equal opportunity. We believe that by standing firm and acting positively on these values, America can reclaim her vision and lead the world as a beacon of optimism and unity.

The people of California deserve a government that supports their hard work and shares their hopes for the future. Our Platform represents the Democratic vision for our State, embracing and implementing the dreams of Californians. We firmly defend these American beliefs, values, and traditions and will work with elected officials and activists to achieve our vision in government and in our communities.

*The California Democratic Party will:*

- Promote peace, real security, the rule of law, and human rights both at home and abroad
- Provide guaranteed support for first responders, military servicemembers, and veterans
- Fight to restore the Constitutional balance among the branches of the federal government
- Create a 21st century economy built on a diverse workforce educated by quality public schools with the right to organize
- Support civil rights, the Americans with Disabilities Access and equality in employment, educational, and economic opportunities
- Ensure universal, comprehensive, and affordable health care for all Californians
- Protect a woman's right to choose how to use her mind, her body and her time
- Secure a dignified retirement for our seniors, including Social Security and Medicare for future generations
- Make California the most energy-independent state, build new industries in the effort to fight global warming and pollution, and protect our natural resources
- Build smart, sustainable, safe, environmentally sound, and caring communities
- Support the arts, especially in our public schools
- Insist upon fiscal common sense, responsibility, and accountability in California and Washington

## **Business and Economy**

California Democrats are dedicated to a robust economy and business climate that creates jobs and economic opportunity for all and the tax base for the programs and policies we champion.

*To grow the jobs and assure a prosperous future for all Californians, California Democrats will:*

- Support the research, development and implementation of green electrical generation and transportation technologies with some combination of tax credits, low interest loans/loan guarantees and grants;
- Promote and guarantee low-interest small business loans to provide the seed capital to launch and expand job creating small business and growth of already successful businesses;
- Support a legislative initiative that will freeze foreclosures for up to six months where homeowners had the ability to pay their mortgage before the adjustable rate started climbing by deferring past due payments and any increases created by the ARM to the end of the loan and/ or wrapped up in a refinance at affordable fix rates. The State will assist in locating private and or institutional lenders willing to enter into such a program. In addition the State needs to investigate and fund prosecutions where appropriate into private lender and or mortgage agent abuses including but not limited to redlining, the unauthorized switch and bait tactic of replacing fixed rate financing with ARMs.
- Support the right of all employees to organize, select a bargaining representative of their choice, work in a safe work environment and to be free from intimidation and retaliation tactics intended to chill their rights; through the use of card check certification

- Oppose privatization of essential government services and the outsourcing of public sector jobs;
- Incentives/reward employers that chose to stay in California that can show a reasonable likelihood of significant sales and job growth, by giving the California Treasurer/Board of Equalization the right to negotiate a competitive package of discounted state-based fees and or taxes to offset some of the employer's anticipated cost savings from moving the business out of California;
- Support the adoption of a Universal Health Care plan for all Californians so that California employers will not have to bear the cost burden of being the principal provider of health care and medical care to injured workers through workers compensation policies they purchase;
- Continue to support and fund job retraining and or vocational rehabilitation programs to meet the manpower needs of California's changing economy;
- Oppose new and unfair trade agreements and renegotiate new agreements.

### **Children, Young Adults and Their Families**

California Democrats believe that children and young people deserve the chance to become thriving and productive members of society. To do so, we will work to provide them with a healthy start, a solid education, and a safe community in which to thrive.

*To help children and young adults reach their full potential, California Democrats will lead the charge to:*

- Expand pre-natal, peri-natal, well-baby care and immunization efforts;
- Enhance childhood education and development through enriching experiences, educational television and other electronic programming/curricula for children;
- Provide quality education at all levels, including vocational counseling, job training and apprenticeships;
- Promote in-school efforts for educational development, access to reasonably priced childcare, and early development centers;
- Lift at-risk families and working poor families out of poverty so they can become independent and lead self-sufficient lives;
- Expand parks, recreation and mentoring centers for children and young people;
- Prosecute those who commit crimes against children, particularly sex crimes against minors, and strictly enforce the penalties for such crimes;
- Ensure that child abuse and neglect court proceedings are accessible and swift for all, and aggressively enforce child-support payment rulings.
- Support the removal of toxic substances from all toys sold in California
- Promote, support and expand school and community sponsored after school programs
- Support the passage and implementation of nutritionally updated school lunch and breakfast programs.

### **Criminal Justice**

Californians deserve to live in safe neighborhoods. We must be tough, smart and just when dealing with crime, starting with prevention and through punishment and rehabilitation efforts. We are determined to put an end to family violence and gang activity, drug and alcohol addiction, unemployment, poverty and racism. We are dedicated to ensuring that our criminal justice system provides fair and equitable treatment for all.

*To promote safe communities, California Democrats will:*

- Provide state-of-the-art equipment and training in the latest crime fighting techniques;
- Enhance victim-witness advocacy that respects the rights of crime victims and provides therapeutic assistance and financial compensation;
- Strictly enforcing the existing penalties for all violent crimes, especially those against women, children, the elderly and disabled, and support comprehensive services for victims of crime:
- Support the establishment of a bipartisan sentencing commission to review inequitable sentencing laws

- Reduce prison overcrowding and the drain on our economy by decreasing penalties for minor drug offenses and other victimless crimes, making the punishment fit the crime;
- Implement community-based policing to break down barriers between law enforcement officers and the people they serve, and to curtail police misconduct;
- Promote responsible gun ownership and reasonable gun safety and work with gun owners and sporting associations to promote gun safety education;
- Continue the efforts to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals;
- Continue to support the common sense ban on deadly assault weapons;
- Prosecute white-collar criminals and improve methods for recovering financial losses;
- Protect consumers against identity theft and violations of privacy to ensure they know what personal information is collected by businesses and government (such as social security numbers, financial data, phone numbers, street and email addresses) and how that information is used;
- Implement legal protection from unsolicited and unwarranted commercial phone calls, faxes and email spam;
- Employ DNA testing when appropriate to ensure that innocent people are not convicted and guilty people are not set free;
- Prohibit the use of so-called "secret evidence" in courts and tribunals;
- Challenge the practice of racial profiling;  
Strive for a state prison system that promotes inmate rehabilitation, education, and job readiness.
- Promote dialog that examines the inequity between public school funding and prison expansion in California, and support efforts to address high school dropout rates.

## **Culture and the Arts**

In the spirit of President Lyndon B. Johnson, who remarked in 1965, "Art is a nation's most precious heritage," California Democrats believe in freedom of expression without compromise, public support of the arts, the principles of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). We further commit to involving artists and cultural workers in the planning and implementation processes.

*In support of the arts, California Democrats will:*

- Celebrate the cultural diversity of our citizens, past and present, including California Indians, Native Americans and indigenous peoples, and encourage improved public knowledge about, and an honest portrayal of, their culture and history;
- Restore arts and humanities efforts at all educational levels;
- Promote multi-media public broadcasting, including community-based public radio and public access television;
- Expand the funding base for the arts by encouraging individual and corporate private sector grants to augment public monies.

## **Disabilities**

People with disabilities have a right to the necessities required to lead dignified lives and to pursue happiness and self-sufficiency. This requires strict enforcement and funding of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), as well as federal and state disability and access laws and regulations. We will fight cuts to Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Efforts, and/or Federal Social Security Disability Income and we will oppose judicial nominees whose philosophies suggest they would dismantle the ADA and other civil rights laws.

*To promote equality for people with disabilities, California Democrats will:*

- Improve accessibility to and full participation in academia and government;
- Enact a Sovereign Immunity Waiver for California; and fight all challenges by any person(s) , government

agency, organization(s) and businesses to the ADA and stop them from impeding the progress toward the enactment of a Sovereign Immunity Waiver in the State of California

- Promote early diagnosis and access to treatment as well as adequate homecare support for children with disabilities;
- Promote alternative forms of employment for persons with disabilities who cannot work standard 8-hour work days or 5-day work weeks due to disability limitations or insufficient transportation;
- Eliminate marriage penalties imposed on SSI recipients, including income parameters;
- End discriminatory policies and practices in health care based upon pre-existing conditions and abolish Medicare's "Homebound" rules;
- Guarantee palliative care; support and enforce improvements to the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan by amending prohibitive costs; strongly oppose detrimental budget cuts in Medicare and Medicaid; and support and enforce the principle of informed choice;
- Improve respite care and in-home support services;
- Promote and broaden financial aid or loan assistance for accessible housing and vehicles and durable medical equipment;
- Eliminate housing discrimination that penalizes or denies persons with disabilities the right to interdependence through shared housing with a spouse or significant other;
- Enforce laws and regulations pertaining to para-transit, public transit and taxis; promote legislation to require para-transit to provide services that cross county lines; and penalize companies that deny services to persons using mobility devices.
- Encourage more balanced participation of people with disabilities on state commissions, particularly the Building Standards Commission
- Promote The California Universal Healthcare Act to provide fiscally sound, affordable healthcare to all Californians, provide every Californian the right to choose his or her own physician and control health cost inflation.
- Provide for the mental and physical health of all returning veterans.
- Promote parity of services to mental medical and dental health for persons with developmental and other disabilities.
- Provide assistance for the middle class at a level commensurate with those who currently qualify for all forms of assistance including medical, dental, mental health services.
- All people with disabilities must be able to sustain quality of life in the least restrictive environment possible and in accessible community settings.

## **Education**

California's children must have access to a free, individually appropriate, high-quality public education from preschool through grade 12. Education must provide a well-rounded curriculum including the arts, music and physical education. Teachers as the stewards of our future, should be well paid and work in safe learning environments with up-to-date equipment and learning tools.

*To help educate California's leaders of tomorrow, Democrats will fight to:*

- Provide linguistically and culturally sensitive educational opportunities;
- Ensure equal and affordable access to vocational, technical, community college, or university-level educational opportunities of the highest caliber at minimal personal expense, including opportunities for lifetime learning and career retraining that enables Californians to participate successfully in the global economy;

- Fund California's public education institutions to meet these requirements so that no person is denied opportunity due to an inability to pay;
- Vest curricular decision-making responsibility in education professionals in conjunction with content experts, including the means and methods of assessment and the decisions regarding the appropriateness of educational placement;
- Ensure that California schools get full funding for any federally mandated programs;
- Assure the provision of sex education for youth at ages that make sense for communities
- Set per-student public education funding at a minimum of \$1,000 per student above the national average to keep California competitive in the global economy.
- Close all American-based schools or facilities that engage in mental, physical, or sexual abuse of our children, and hold accountable all responsible parties.

## **Energy & Environment**

The environment is the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. Our world's beauty and complexity - the elegance of its inter-connectedness - is a foundation of our inspiration, creativity and spirituality. California Democrats have led the way towards bi-partisan solutions to problems arising from our industrial society - resource extraction, waste disposal, and pollution - and their disparate impact on the poor, on ethnic minorities and on indigenous people. We will work to reverse the real and imminent threat of Global Warming and to protect our planet.

*To safeguard our cherished environment, California Democrats will:*

- Create green collar jobs by incentivizing the development, production and purchase of environmentally friendly products, renewable energy, and recycled materials through public/private partnerships such as the state and national Apollo Alliance;
- By 2020: Return to the state's 1990 greenhouse gas emissions levels; produce 40 percent of California's electricity from renewable and sustainable energy sources and reduce electricity and natural gas use by 20 percent; by 2030 produce 40 percent of the state's transportation fuels from non-petroleum sources; and support Low Carbon Fuel Standards;
- Reject any attempt for new offshore oil or gas development, preserve coastal access, protect the mandates of the California Coastal Act, and support the recovery and preservation of our ocean ecosystems;
- Oppose any attempt to weaken the federal Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, or the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
- Preserve the health of the Delta, by bringing the Delta levee system to 200-year flood protection;
- Curtail and phase out pesticides which pose threats to our farm workers and consumers;
- Encourage the use of fire resistant, termite proof, energy efficient building materials, in all new residential and light commercial construction;
- Conserve natural resources and public lands to combat suburban sprawl; reject any sale of public forestry and park lands; and safeguard California's forests through sustained yield best practices forestry and preservation of heritage trees;
- Support minimum price guarantees as a method of promoting domestic and entrepreneur renewable energy production so as to increase the percentage of renewables in California's power mix;
- Support the Attorney General's suit against the Environmental Protection Agency to grant California's waiver request under the Clean Air Act, and support Clean Vehicle Incentive Programs;
- Encourage the goal of "net zero emissions" new homes by 2020, and zero net energy new commercial construction by 2030;
- Urge Congress to pass a rigorous greenhouse gas emissions cap for the nation that meets or exceeds sound scientific standards.

## **Equality of Opportunity**

The California Democratic Party believes that all persons deserve the opportunity to participate fully in the economic, cultural, political and social facets of society. We take pride in and celebrate our diversity and work to foster the common values and commitments that unite all people regardless of their age, cultural heritage, national origin, disability, socio-economic status, gender, race, sexual orientation or views on religion.

*To fight for all people to live with dignity and equality, California Democrats will:*

- Speak out in a unified voice against hatred, racism and violence directed against any minority group;
- Encourage, support and defend voluntary and mandatory affirmative action measures to enhance access and equity in employment, education and business opportunities;
- Affirm that the decision to accept or reject any religious belief, to bind oneself to any religious creed, or to hold no religious belief at all is a private matter, and should always remain a matter of individual conscience, and we oppose giving any government funding to organizations that discriminate;
- Protect the constitutional rights of Native Americans and the sovereign rights of Indian nations as well as the tribal sovereignty and well-established rights and jurisdictions of California Native/Indian nations;
- Support nondiscrimination and equality for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender people in all aspects of their lives.
- We support the LGBT Community in its quest for the right to legal marriage as well as the clergy's complete religious freedom to solemnize marriages in accordance with their beliefs.

## **Health Care**

California Democrats believe that health care is a right not a privilege. The CDP recognizes the health and well-being of Californians cannot continue to be based on arbitrary private and public financial decisions and therefore advocates legislation to create and implement a publicly funded (single-payer), privately delivered, fiscally tractable, affordable, comprehensive, secure, high-quality, efficient, and sustainable health care for all Californians.

*To build a healthy future for all Californians, Democrats will:*

- Support and implement universal comprehensive health care for all Californians, that includes medical and dental care, full reproductive health services, preventive services, prescription drugs and mental health counseling and treatment;
- Lead the nation in providing comprehensive quality health care to all our people by enacting SCHP coverage for all children in California;
- Oppose efforts to privatize Medi-Cal and Medicare;
- Until such time as all Californians are covered by publicly funded health care, we shall support a requirement that all HMOs and health insurers obtain prior approval from the state before rates can be increased.
- Expand and strengthen respite care and in-home support services including adequate background checks prior to licensure, and promote an in-home support services system;
- Ensure economic and physical access to multilingual health care services;
- Support the full funding of community clinics and health centers that serve low-income and homeless populations;
- Enforce the Patient's Bill of Rights;
- Affirm that medical decisions must be made with respect for patients' rights to privacy and freedom to have control over their lives with fully informed consent;
- Lead the fight against diseases by supporting and expanding stem cell and other groundbreaking research.

## **Immigration**

As the most diverse state in the nation, California's vibrant diversity reflects the foundation of America's strength. It emphasizes the fundamental principles of inclusion and national unity that respect the rules of law and human dignity. California Democrats believe that the American immigration system should be inclusive, fair, and just. Immigration must be consistent with American values of freedom, opportunity, compassion, and respect for human rights.

*As a state built upon the successes of immigrants, California Democrats will:*

- Affirm that we can make America stronger at our borders and uphold our values by honoring the tradition of providing a safe place for immigrants seeking a life of freedom and opportunity;
- Ensure that the fundamental rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution are applied to every person within U.S. borders;
- Support efforts to safeguard America's security while respecting the principles of the American Dream;
- Support comprehensive, bipartisan immigration reform that addresses fairness, family reunification, and a path to legal residency for undocumented immigrants in our communities;
- Encourage increased and expedited processing of applications for family reunification and naturalization while supporting reasonable and fair application fees;
- Support efforts providing undocumented immigrants with a transitional path to legalized residency and earned citizenship, including methods to pay back taxes, learn English, register with the federal government for work permits, and acquire driver licenses and insurance coverage;
- Support efforts to provide assistance in English learning and educational opportunities for cultural immersion.
- Support efforts that maximize educational opportunities for all immigrant students, including access to public education and financial assistance as an investment for our common future;
- Affirm efforts to provide equal access to housing to all immigrants and condemn any xenophobic or racist conduct that denies equal housing to all, including a landlord's inquiry into the citizenship or immigration status of a tenant or a prospective tenant;
- Support efforts to provide healthcare and access to insurance for all immigrants to ensure the well-being of our communities;
- Support efforts to promote available government services to immigrant communities;
- Support outreach efforts that promote civic engagement and participation in the political process among naturalized citizens, such as voter registration and voter education, and support effective legal safeguards and protections for access to voting and voting materials in letters, spirit, and practice;
- Oppose scapegoating, racial profiling, bigotry, vigilantism, and any xenophobic conduct that polarize communities and denounce actions, by government or otherwise, that keep undocumented immigrants in the shadows of our society;
- Ensure intervention for abuse, discrimination, and crime among or against immigrants and removing the fear of arrest and deportation for reporting such abuse;
- Encourage the cooperation of local law enforcement with immigrant communities in the interest of public safety for all; and
- Denounce the use of local law enforcement agencies as federal immigration law enforcement.

### **Internet, Free Speech and Communications**

California 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. California 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. California Democrats further reaffirm their 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.

*To promote and support the Internet, Free Speech and Communications California Democrats will:*

- Support protections against any degradation or blocking of access to any websites or content on the Internet to which access is legal and guaranteed by the Constitution;
- Ensure that consumers have the right to free email and that any and all communications will be protected from warrantless search and seizure as guaranteed in 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;
- Establish and secure ownership limits on private sector mass media to encourage and provide more cultural diversity, while protecting the openness, accessibility and integrity of the Internet as a public media resource for all Americans, regardless of income.

### **Labor, Economic Justice and Poverty Elimination**

California Democrats have always been close partners with Labor and strong supporters of workers' rights. The 'glass ceiling' for people of color and women must be shattered and there must be equal pay for equal or comparable work. Our strong workforce, coupled with a work ethic second to none, us among our nation's most valuable resources.

California's prosperity depends on ensuring a minimum standard of living for all its residents. Food, shelter, clothing, health care and education are among the basic human rights of all individuals. We are determined in our commitment to safeguard these basic human rights and to support public services designed to eliminate poverty, hunger and homelessness among the poor, the elderly, the blind and disabled in order to strengthen all California communities.

*To meet the basic human needs of all Californians, Democrats will:*

- Support a living wage, especially in areas where the increasingly high cost of living and rising inflation renders it impossible to afford the basic necessities of life even through working a full-time job, to lift the working poor out of poverty and achieve self-sufficiency;
- Fight for public assistance programs which allow individuals to support themselves and their families;
- Guarantee Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for CalWorks and Supplemental Security Income/State Supplementary Program (SSI/SSP) recipients in state and federal budgets;
- Support the full funding of food stamp programs to relieve hunger;
- Promote expansion of emergency food networks, senior and school meal programs to end starvation;
- Encourage business and preference for firms that employ California workers whenever public funds finance bridges, highways and other public works construction;
- Pay prevailing wages to protect the economic base of the communities where government-funded projects are undertaken, thereby ensuring that government is not lowering the standard of living;
- Support the 8-hour workday and daily overtime and fight any efforts to repeal the 40-hour workweek;
- Enhance the strong workers' safety programs with adequate and appropriate penalties for injurious and unsafe working conditions;
- Boycott employers who have permanently replaced strikers and protect the collective bargaining rights of workers in both the public and private sectors;
- Fight anti-worker initiatives that seek to undermine the ability of union leaders to carry out the will of their members and engage in political activities.

### **National Security**

California Democrats support a strong national defense which includes considerations for all aspects of defense, not just the Armed Forces. We are committed to a foreign policy which holds the use of military forces as the last defense option, only when all else fails. We support the consolidation of all aspects of the national defense budget, now spread among Defense, State, Energy, Homeland Security and other cabinet departments, into a single, consolidated budget line item, so that redundancies can be eliminated, and, more importantly, no aspect of total national defense goes under-served.

*To protect and defend California and our Constitution, Democrats will:*

- Rebalance the security portfolio in the context of a consolidated defense budget to place more emphasis on nonmilitary security tools such as diplomacy and foreign aid, by shifting as much as 10% of the current security funding from Defense to State and Homeland Security

- Reduce the Defense development and procurement programs to those items deemed essential for defense against real and not imagined threats
- Fund and improve the nonproliferation assistance program, emphasizing the sequestering and ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons and weapons materials, including our own
- Reduce external threats through increased participation in and cooperation with international agencies, greater participation in peacekeeping operations, and through international collaboration in reestablishing sound government in failed and failing states
- Increase the security of ports by greatly increasing the inspection routine at all air and sea ports, and by further limiting points of access and increasing the inspection routine on all land borders
- Integrate anti-terrorist information and actions by rapidly establishing the free exchange of threat information among the anti-terrorist operating agencies
- Increase foreign non-military aid for improved anti-terrorist police training, investigation, information exchange, and international cooperation
- Reaffirm *posse comitatus* and forbid the use of American troops on American soil, except in the event of invasion, or in an assistance role to the states in the event of a natural disaster, and then only at their request
- Increase federal funding to states and communities for equipping, training and expanding the force of first-responders
- Rebuild and strengthen the National Guard as the states' principal means of providing internal security under the command of the various Governors.

Further, California Democrats recognize the supremacy of the United States Constitution in all matters, and enjoin our representatives in Congress to reaffirm the civil and personal rights in that document, and not to trade them off against invasive and intrusive security legislation against imagined threats. "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance;" the price must not be our constitutional rights.

### **Political Reform**

California Democrats believe that a healthy democracy is based on clean elections: public financing of political campaigns at all levels of government, campaign spending limits, restoration of the fairness doctrine and a strong role for political parties. We will fight the culture of corruption, cronyism and incompetence in politics that has inflicted a great cost upon the American people. We demand open and fraud-free elections and incontrovertible government accountability to the electorate. We will ensure that all eligible voters can vote, and that all votes are counted as cast and can be verified by the voter. We support public ownership of all election processes, software and equipment. We will insist that officeholders respond honestly and effectively to constituent needs through transparent and open public service.

*To promote honest leadership and open government, California Democrats will:*

- Enhance the democratic process by ensuring an educated citizenry, equal opportunity for influence, honest public debate, competitive elections and robust civic participation;
- Support and implement clean money legislation at the local, state and federal levels.
- Uphold the Voting Rights Act and its implementation in letters, practice, and spirit and improve voter outreach and education efforts, especially for youth and underserved communities;
- Increase voter participation by advocating for extended voting hours and/or days, scheduling elections on weekends, or by declaring Election Day a holiday;
- Investigate and prosecute any and all forms of voter intimidation, including improper solicitation of documentation;
- Demand transparency in every stage with voting system software (including open-source software); national standards for electronic voting machine certification; external, non-partisan certifying groups that publicly disclose testing results; reliable voter-verifiable systems with a paper ballot as the ballot of record; robust auditing procedures that include absentee ballots; updated and thorough recount procedures; public ownership of all voting systems and software
- Support candidates who pledge full accountability to the electorate, and hold them to that pledge; including regular reports, in person, to the members of the DSCC and their constituents in their home districts

- Encourage, where feasible, instant run-off elections, especially in primaries
- Encourage no concessions by candidates until all ballots are counted.

## **Seniors**

California Democrats recognize the importance of our seniors, the fastest growing age group in the nation, and believe they enrich our everyday experiences, connect us with our past and forecast our collective future. We affirm and embrace the continuing contributions of our seniors and we continue to be committed to fostering the strong bond between the young, those in the middle, and our elders. Our seniors deserve the highest standard of care from the health care industry and a prescription drug program that helps them get the medicine they need. We are committed to protecting homeownership and hard-earned pensions as well as the support services and assistance that collectively help seniors maintain independence and quality of life. We strongly believe that, personal circumstances permitting, seniors be offered the opportunity to remain in jobs that they have so successfully performed in for many, many years. Early, forced retirement costs seniors much needed income, results in loss or reduction of benefits and brings additional financial burden to Social Security and Medi Care. It also results, sometimes, in a very inexperienced workforce.

*To honor California seniors, Democrats will:*

- Oppose mandatory retirement;
- Strengthen Social Security and preserve hard-earned pensions as the bedrocks of a dignified retirement;
- Continue Medicare as the Defined Benefit Plan;
- Work toward universal, comprehensive health care; until that is achieved, reform Medicare Part D to make it clear, affordable and easily accessible to people of all incomes levels, specifically addressing the numerous eligibility problems encountered by pharmacists and the confusing number of private drug plans from which millions of retirees have been forced to choose;
- Affirm the right of all seniors to manage their attendant care so they may live with dignity in their own homes and communities;
- Increased, stable funding, and expansion of service hours that are provided the clients for In Home Supportive Services (IHSS)
- Investigate and prosecute crimes against seniors, including white-collar and financial schemes as well as elder abuse, and strictly enforce all existing penalties for crimes against seniors;
- Increase counseling, emergency, and permanent , low to moderate income, affordable senior housing, and the number of senior centers that provide services, including day care efforts, help for seniors with Alzheimer's, as well as support for their families, and more food banks for the growing number of seniors who lack basic, adequate nutrition;
- We support increased public transportation and other transit services to support seniors on limited incomes with or without health concerns to travel freely and enjoy a quality lifestyle.

## **Sustainable Communities**

California Democrats seek to build healthy, livable and sustainable communities that conserve natural resources, promote smart growth, are economically prosperous, and socially equitable. Planning for sustainable communities involves conserving our natural resources for an environmentally healthy community. Current consumption rates are not sustainable and exacerbate global warming and continued urban/suburban sprawl. We are committed to environmental justice and a sustainable lifestyle.

*To promote sustainable communities, California Democrats will:*

- Reward local governments and regions for completing voluntary, sub-regional comprehensive planning processes that stem the tide of urban and suburban sprawl and that reduce dependence upon the automobile as a primary means of transportation, and enhance infrastructure for public transportation, bicycle, and pedestrians;
- Create greenbelts around our urban areas, thereby reducing traffic gridlock, wildfires and erosion, and promoting efficient land use;

- Promote regional tax revenue sharing in order to decrease local governments' dependence upon sales tax revenue and minimize sprawl;
- Increase the construction of affordable housing to alleviate and prevent homelessness, and develop supportive housing with continuum of care services to help homeless people re-establish themselves as self-sufficient contributors to society;
- Protect and promote affordable housing to alleviate and prevent homelessness;
- Protect existing homeowners' property rights by limiting eminent domain to reasonable public uses, and oppose the practice of abusing eminent domain to take homes without the consent of the owner and conveying it from one private person to another or to any corporation merely to increase its tax revenue;
- Encourage incentives to reclaim and redevelop old abandoned buildings and brownfields;
- Provide a homestead floor with absolute minimum protection for homeowners when they are forced into bankruptcy, due to unanticipated health care costs or predatory lending schemes.

## **Veterans**

All veterans from all components of military service should receive equal treatment, including those veterans of operations-other-than-war undertaken by the United States, and should be provided all the entitlements given to veterans of earlier service, including education and training benefits, health benefits, home loans and other financial assistance. We support the G.I. Bill of Rights for the 21st Century and believe that earned benefits should be readily available to all service members, eligible veterans and their families on a timely basis within their own communities on a timely basis.

*Through the shared sacrifice of all Californians to leave no veteran behind, Democrats will:*

- Demand truth in recruiting and open enlistment for all;
- Provide support services for active duty military personnel and their families without cost to the service member;
- Provide our troops with the latest in protective equipment and weaponry and provide total training prior to deployment;
- Provide the same benefits to those given to the regular Armed Forces for all National Guard and Reserve Members activated for federal service;
- Support enforcement of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) ensuring that activated Reservists and National Guard can resume their jobs upon return, without exception, with the state being the employer of last resort when necessary;
- Provide payment from the state for veterans and military benefits earned if the federal government is unwilling to pay;
- Waive all tuition and fees in state colleges and universities for all veterans of the Mideast wars (2 August 1990 – future date not determined).
- Use a presumption of service-connection on all claims for benefits and services;
- Grant citizenship for non-citizen veterans who have served honorably in the military of the United States.

## **Women**

California is the proud home of pioneering women who have blazed new trails in business, entrepreneurship, culture and politics. Democrats respect women as full partners in family and society. We proudly and vigorously support a woman's right to choose how to use her mind, her body and her time.

*As part of our commitment to empowering California women, Democrats will:*

- Promote equal access to training, jobs, promotion, capital, equity and contracts;
- Support affirmative action, Equal Pay for Equal Work, Title IX, the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and ratification of the ERA;

- Preserve confidential, unrestricted access to affordable, quality and culturally appropriate health and reproductive services, including contraception and emergency contraception, without requiring guardian, judicial, parental or spousal consent or notification;
- Support the many lifesaving programs of the Violence against Women Act (VAWA), including the educational and preventative programs, especially for those who are at higher risk for sexual and domestic violence;
- Increase early breast cancer detection, treatment and supportive services;
- Enhance education and support services to women with dependent children in order to increase parenting and job skills;
- Expand workplace rights associated with pregnancy and emergency family leave.

## **World Peace and International Relations**

The new Administration must bring our troops home from Iraq starting now. To this end, we support the repeal of the 2002 Authorization to Use Military Force in Iraq; oppose further appropriations except those necessary for a safe and orderly withdrawal of our troops from Iraq to begin without delay; and call for an international conference to implement a cease-fire in Iraq. This war of choice has squandered America's standing in the world and our alliances against al Qaeda, especially considering the failure to find weapons of mass destruction, the basing of decisions on cherry-picked intelligence, and the lack of proper planning and equipment for our troops.

America must be a light to the world, a beacon of freedom and democracy, which respects and promotes international cooperation and sovereignty, and promotes human rights in our deeds as well as our words. We honor our troops best by returning them home to their loved ones to protect against the real threats to America. We honor the valor of those who have sacrificed their lives, by bringing home their colleagues safely to their families, and we honor the men and women of our military when we only place them in harm's way against the real and immediate threats against our beloved country they so nobly serve. We must also properly provide for this new generation of veterans upon their return.

We must turn Iraq over to the Iraqis: starting immediately, end the wrongful occupation of Iraq and re-establish a commitment to the rule of international law and human rights; provide for the financial security of the Iraqi people during Iraq's transition toward self-governance; return the national territory of Iraq to the sovereign control of the people of Iraq with no permanent U.S. bases in that country; support international diplomatic efforts to assist in peaceful reconciliation amongst the Iraqi people; and, contribute financial resources to rebuild Iraq's physical and economic infrastructure. We must restore the trust of the world and even our closest allies. America will once again be a leader rather than a unilateralist loner.

America's security requires an effective, rebuilt military and a commitment to enduring alliances. We must have a strong national defense based on protecting and defending our country and our Constitution and on telling the truth to our civilians and our soldiers before we send troops abroad to defend America. American foreign policy was built on a bipartisan foundation of engagement in the world: fostering multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and NATO, and using our economic might to support the foreign aid institutions, such as the Marshall Plan. We must change our domestic policy to ensure that our need for energy supply and our current extraordinary debt dependence do not drive our foreign policy.

*California Democrats support an international policy that will:*

- Collaborate with other nations to promote peace, fight terrorists, increase literacy and child survival rates, combat poverty, disease and malnutrition, bolster existing and new democracies and developing nations, and reduce the support and demand for narcotics;
- Condition aid to governments upon respect for human rights;
- Ensure that the world's most dangerous weapons stay out of the hands of terrorists by expanding the pace and scope of programs to eliminate and safeguard nuclear materials and enhancing efforts to keep these and other deadly materials out of the hands of terrorists;
- Perform a national threat assessment and reallocate our nuclear arsenal and missile defense expenditures in a manner commensurate with actual threats;
- Comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Hand Weapons Convention, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and all other international agreements ratified by the U.S. Senate, Sign and Ratify the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

- Reduce our nation's huge trade deficit and restore America's global economic leadership by designing policies that maximize the benefits and minimize the negative consequences of globalization;
- Structure fair trade agreements requiring countries to adopt and enforce core, internationally-recognized labor standards, including rights to associate and bargain collectively, as well as prohibitions on child labor, discrimination in employment and forced labor;
- Promote population planning world-wide through education and support for family planning organizations;
- Tailor United States foreign policy to eliminate the worst pockets of poverty by targeting an additional one percent of our federal budget to aid and development;
- Strengthen the United Nations and regional organizations to achieve global security;
- Affirm the mission of the State Department as the promotion of world peace;
- Support the U.S. joining the International Criminal Court;
- Follow the Geneva and Hague Conventions. No torture. No exceptions.