

Report of the Democratic Party of Virginia
Resolutions Committee
Adopted June 5, 2004
Roanoke

Virginia Democrats
Putting Virginia First

The Platform Of The Democratic Party Of Virginia

Statement Of Common Purpose

We exist as a party to elect Democratic leaders of character, integrity, ability and vision at all levels of government in Virginia. The Democratic Party of Virginia is the true party of fiscal responsibility, ensuring excellence in education, making adequate infrastructure investments, preserving the social safety network, and creating economic opportunity for all Virginians. We are dedicated to protecting our constitutionally established rights and freedoms that provide us with opportunities to improve our lives. We work to organize all of our citizens through a democratic government to achieve together those beneficial ends that we cannot achieve individually. We believe, as did our party's founder, Thomas Jefferson, "That government is the strongest of which every man feels a part."

Our Core Values

Part I: PRESERVING VIRGINIA'S WORLD-CLASS PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

We believe that education is the key to opportunity. 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 No Child Left Behind Act

We believe that supporting our schools is more than just a sound bite. We believe that the No Child Left Behind Act mandates policies that have not been proven to enable children to achieve academically. We believe No Child Left Behind ignores neighborhoods impacted by non-English speaking new immigrant populations, neighborhoods with inadequate preschool preparatory opportunities, and school districts with funding levels inadequate to properly educate children. We support meeting federal financial commitments to fund federal education mandates, including No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. We support revising public school funding formulas to ensure the minimum level of federal, state and local level of funding per student necessary to educate our young people and provide advanced placement or international baccalaureate courses to all qualified high school students. We support the fulfillment of the intent of No Child Left Behind by extending the opportunity for students to attend Head Start classes on a national basis. We support extending the time period for public schools to meet No Child Left Behind requirements in under-funded school districts and districts serving a high proportion of children from non-English speaking schools. We support efforts to eliminate existing flaws in the current testing procedures, scoring methodologies, attendance, and certification requirements.

Support For Job Training and Continuing Education

We support job training and retraining programs that make available the skills adults need to compete for jobs in the new 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 expanding affordable Internet access to every home and public library, computer center and school in Virginia in hopes of closing the digital divide. We support providing more opportunities for continuing education for adults.

Support For Teachers

We support Virginia's 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 them. We believe that teachers should be treated as professionals and compensated fairly. We support increasing teacher salaries to reach and exceed the national average in order to recruit and retain the best teachers. Quality instruction is necessary to enable students to meet higher standards. We believe the Standards of Learning (SOLs) should continue to be refined, and that multiple indicators of performance evaluation should be utilized.

Meeting Funding Responsibilities

We support and encourage efforts to provide more state funding for school construction, renovation and reduction in class sizes. We applaud Governor Mark R. Warner and Lieutenant Governor Timothy Kaine's successful efforts in 2004 for an historic reinvestment in our K-12 public education system. 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 teaching good values, the responsibilities of citizenship, family life education, and a well-rounded curriculum, must be an essential part of education. 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 repels prejudices.

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 recognize the importance of supporting the efforts of immigrant families to send their children to Virginia's institutions of higher learning, since these students will become productive citizens and part of the workforce of tomorrow. We support measures that encourage those students to achieve fair and equal access to Virginia colleges and universities.

Part II: CREATING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR VIRGINIA'S FAMILIES

We believe in and support public policies that create good jobs for all Virginians. We support the continued creation of a business climate characterized by a skilled, well-educated workforce, fair tax policies, access to abundant competitively priced 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 Warner and Lieutenant Governor Kaine for their ongoing efforts to strengthen Virginia's economy by attracting new business to the Commonwealth. We support job creation through promoting tourism to Virginia's natural attractions, historic sites, museums and cultural attractions.

Protecting Workers

We support an immediate increase in the federal minimum wage, which will improve the quality of life for the working men and women of this country and state. We support the right of workers to form bargaining units and believe in the principle of equal pay for equal work. We support farmers and their families. We encourage programs for diversification of crops to ensure the continued viability of family farms in Virginia. We support competitive contracting for all federal agencies so that federal employees, who are recognized as one of the most professional, skilled and dedicated government employee workforces in the world, can compete on a fair and equitable basis for contracts, taking into account the actual costs and the consequences of letting private contracts.

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 support the efforts of Governor Warner and Lieutenant Governor Kaine to increase state government contract procurement for minority and women-owned businesses. 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 administration.

Improving Trade Policies

We support enactment of fair trade policies that reduce the U.S. trade deficit, protect U.S. trade laws, and include enforceable workers' rights and environmental standards in trade agreements. 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, enhanced "Buy America" requirements, and 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 support quality training opportunities for people with disabilities, so they can learn 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.

Part III: PRESERVING SOUND FISCAL MANAGEMENT OF VIRGINIA'S GOVERNMENT

We support the Governor and Lieutenant Governor's efforts to solve Virginia's budget crisis and to make Virginia's tax system fairer to all Virginians. We support the Governor's far-sighted approach to the comprehensive reform of state government and efforts to make Virginia's government more accountable, efficient and responsive to the citizens of the Commonwealth. We support reform efforts in the delivery of services, procurement, information technology and the budget. We believe that true fiscal conservatives pay their bills on time and do not promote gimmicks and one-time fixes in order to meet Virginia's constitutional mandate for a balanced budget. We believe in fiscal policies that protect Virginia's pristine AAA bond rating and applaud the successful efforts of the Governor and

the vigilant Democratic members of the General Assembly who provided that protection. We do not support making promises we know we cannot afford.

Part IV: CELEBRATING DIVERSITY & COMMUNITY

The Democratic Party of Virginia does not support discrimination on any basis, for any reason. We welcome 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.

Support For People With Disabilities

We honor people with disabilities and support their goals of 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. We support Governor Warner's efforts to further the implementation of the *Olmstead* decision.

Opposition to Discrimination

We oppose writing discrimination into the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. We object to the passage of measures that would pose an unconstitutional infringement on the civil rights of citizens of Virginia on the basis of sexual orientation. We support proper legal challenges against any such measures.

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 recognize that current law needlessly prohibits many Virginia employers from offering health benefits to members of their employees' households other than married spouses and dependent children. We recognize that, as a result, health coverage is denied to thousands of mothers, fathers, domestic partners, nondependent children, and other household members who would otherwise have health insurance. We support changing Virginia's law to allow private employers to have the right to extend health benefits, at no cost to the Commonwealth, to additional household members if they choose to do so. We support eliminating legal barriers to home loans and home ownership.

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 affirm our historic commitment to civil rights and honor those Virginians, from Oliver Hill to state Sen. 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. We support the automatic restoration of voting rights upon completion of the offender's sentence, including all required community supervision or service.

Part V: PRESERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

We believe that we can protect the environment and expand the economy. We believe all Virginians should be able to enjoy Virginia's natural heritage – and Virginians should be assured that the air they breathe is pure, the water they drink is clean, and the land they live on is safe from

hazard. We acknowledge our sacred obligation to protect the earth and preserve our quality of life for future generations.

Support For Environment And Business Partnerships

We support the reauthorization, funding and enforcement of federal and state environmental laws and programs that preserve and strengthen our commitment to protect Virginia's natural resources. We encourage businesses and communities to take more initiative to protect the environment and support measures that make it easier for them to do so. We encourage all families and businesses to continue to recycle – and conserve energy – to help sustain our scarce resources and expect the government to assist in these efforts. Environmental protection should include more education on compliance for small and medium sized business, more streamlined permitting processes, and tough but fair enforcement for those who put human health and safety at risk.

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, 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 splendor, which is 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 farmland to remain in agricultural use. We support the efforts of local communities to encourage appropriate development by providing necessary information, technical assistance and funding and targeting of state economic efforts of projects in inner cities and rural areas 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.

Support For Limiting Out Of State Trash

We support efforts to obtain federal authority to limit importation of out-of-state garbage and other innovative and effective ways to address this issue.

Part VI: ENSURING AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

We support legislation to preserve the health care safety net for all Virginians. We support public policies that ensure that all Virginians have access to affordable, high-quality health care. We commend Governor Warner for establishing 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 focus on prevention and recognize that hard-working, lower income citizens need assistance with the costs of health care, and that the elderly and persons with disabilities of all ages should be able to live as independently as possible.

Support For Medicaid Reforms

We support measures that restore funding for health care, thereby addressing the starving of the state's publicly funded health insurance programs. We support measures that improve the eligibility requirements for the state Medicaid program so that health care benefits will be available to additional needy Virginians. We support the revision of the number of elderly and disabled Medicaid waiver slots and the qualifications necessary to attain that status in order to take into account the average nationwide availability of similar benefits across the country.

Support For Individual Health Care Decisions

We support the right of individuals to make their own health care decisions, in consultation with medical professionals. We support efforts to hold HMOs liable for their treatment decisions.

Support For True Access To Prescription Drugs

We affirm our belief that access to prescription medication is critical to adequate health care and the rapidly increasing price 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 to fully fund the Social Security Trust Fund as well as modernize and continue Medicare as a comprehensive benefit program. We support transportation programs that provide assistance to seniors who no longer can drive to medical appointments.

Part VII: ENSURING FAIR ELECTIONS

We support a statewide state-administered 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.

Protecting Voting Integrity

We believe in a voting system that ensures fair, open and reliable results for all elections and that will inspire the public's confidence regarding the integrity of that system. We support the rapid enactment of measures that will require that all voting machines to include reliable, secure and verifiable results.

Support For Redistricting Reform

We agree with Governor Warner, who has described computer-precision redistricting as a threat to democracy in Virginia. *We support legislative redistricting that is fair to all citizens, that follows logical geographical boundaries, and that strives to keep communities of interest intact. We support the creation of an independent commission for the redistricting of legislative boundaries in the Commonwealth.*

Support For Consecutive Gubernatorial Terms

We support an amendment to the Virginia constitution to remove the prohibition against a Governor serving consecutive terms. *We encourage all Democratic elected officials to support such an amendment.*

Part VIII: KEEPING CITIZENS SAFE AND SECURE

We agree 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 National Guardsmen and Guardswomen who keep us safe and support full funding for the tools they need to do their jobs, including wages and benefits that allow them and their families to enjoy a good quality of life in Virginia.

Support The Fair Administration Of Justice

We recognize that the U.S. Constitution guarantees equal treatment under the law and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity or national origin in the exercise of police powers. We oppose criminal profiling on the basis of ethnicity, race or religion and find such profiling to be abhorrent to our system of justice.

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 support common-sense state and local firearms safety legislation.

Support Policies Against Hate Crimes

We support public policies and laws that protect people from crimes against individuals because of their race, religion, color, national origin, gender or sexual orientations.

Support Fighting Terrorism

We affirm efforts to defend our nation and our Commonwealth against terrorism and ensure that national security can and should be undertaken while preserving the civil rights and liberties of the residents of the Commonwealth. We recognize the Virginia Democratic tradition of protecting the human rights and civil liberties of all citizens and oppose deputizing local police officers for the purpose of investigating immigration violations.

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 work with state and local officials 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.

Part VIII: BRINGING PEACE TO THE MIDDLE EAST AND IRAQ

We affirm the American tradition of promoting peace and the non-violent resolution of conflict. We affirm our nation and our Commonwealth's leadership in the advancement of human rights and the cause of religious and intellectual freedoms, the eradication of unjust discrimination in all forms, and the promotion of economic policies that ensure opportunity for all.

Support For Our Troops

We support our troops and the families they have left behind, here in Virginia and across our country. 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. armed and other coalition forces from Iraq, thereby ending our military engagement there.

Achieving Peace In the Middle East

We recognize that the Democratic Party stands in strong support of a secure Israel alongside a viable Palestinian state. We applaud the courage and vision of Israelis and Palestinians who are working together to achieve lasting peace and security. We call upon the United States to take a more active role in the Middle East by embracing and encouraging all serious efforts for all parties to move away from violence and terrorism in order to achieve an enduring settlement of the conflict in the Middle East.

Part X: FINDING SOLUTIONS TO TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

We acknowledge that traffic and congestion impact Virginia's growing economy and Virginians' quality of life. We recognize that more needs to be done to meet the state's current and future transportation needs, including the provision for 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.

Support Responsible Growth

We believe Virginia should adopt smart growth concepts to guide land-use planning and development. We encourage the Governor to continue to make recommendations for responsible growth throughout the Commonwealth.

Support For Transportation Facilities

We recognize that the maintenance and the necessary expansion of Virginia's transit and street networks cannot occur without additional funds.

Our Resolution

We resolve to support these common purposes and to defend our core values as Virginia Democrats.