

## **Delaware Democratic Party Platform**

The Delaware Democratic Party (Democrats) believes that it is government's responsibility, as custodians of the public health and welfare, to protect the people, air, land, and water, of our state. We believe that government has a duty to invest in the future of our state by providing quality education for all of Delaware's youth and that it is our responsibility to promote healthy communities by ensuring access to affordable healthcare. We believe that economic opportunity is crucial to the well-being of every Delawarean, and we believe that encouraging economic growth can be compatible with a safe and healthy environment.

The Delaware Democratic Party is proud to see our own Joe Biden in the White House and stand firmly behind his administration. From New Castle County Councilman, to United States Senator and as our Vice President, Joe Biden has always been there for the working people of Delaware.

We believe that government is accountable to all Delawareans, and that public funds are the people's money. We believe that government must exercise wise and prudent stewardship of revenue funds, and that taxes should be kept low for working class Delawareans, while protecting our most vulnerable citizens: our elderly and our youth population.

We believe in the innate dignity of all human beings, and that our rights as human beings apply to every Delawarean. We believe our citizens have the right to feel safe in their communities, and we support measures to prevent crime, and protect Delawareans from those who would commit crimes, as well as from those who would abuse power.

We believe that inclusiveness is vital to our collective strength. We pledge to recruit and organize at all levels of government, because a government that utilizes this strength to guarantee rights and services is more influential and effective than individuals working alone. Further, we pledge to seek out and listen to fresh ideas from newly involved Democrats, to bring them into the process and ensure that they have a voice in our Party, and a place at the table.

We believe we are stronger when we have an economy that works for everyone—an economy that grows incomes for working people, creates good-paying jobs, backs the working class, and puts a better life within reach for all Delawareans. We need an economy that prioritizes long-term investment over short-term profit-seeking, rewards the common interest over self-interest, and promotes innovation and entrepreneurship.

We, the Democratic Party of Delaware, dedicate ourselves to maintaining and improving our leadership in government. We encourage participation of all Delawareans - those in our Party, those seeking affiliation, and those who have a broad thirst for ensuring equality for all. We support candidates that promote personal freedom, economic and educational opportunity, efficient and effective government, and justice for all. We believe that cooperation is better than conflict, unity is better than division, empowerment is better than resentment, and bridges are

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better than walls. Through these principles, we can preserve and create a stable and thriving Delaware.

1. **An Economy That Works For Everyone:** Delaware Democrats support conditions that lead to good paying jobs with fair wages and comprehensive benefits to grow the working and middle class and provide opportunity for all workers. We are committed to building strong and sustained economic growth.
  - a. *Infrastructure:* Delaware Democrats are proponents of putting Delawareans to work updating and expanding our roadways, bridges, rail lines, and public transit, which will enhance Delaware's long term economic growth while making our roads safer. Beyond transportation-related projects, we believe in identifying, supporting, and advancing key projects, such as expanding the Port of Wilmington, upgrading Delaware's energy supply, improving the quality of inland waterways, hardening infrastructure against the effects of climate change, and increasing high speed internet access across our rural communities as a means to attract and retain businesses and residents.
  - b. *Wages:* No one who works full-time should have to struggle to provide for their family. Delaware Democrats support our state's working families and strongly believe in a \$15 minimum wage with increases tied to the cost of living and inflation, paid sick leave, and short-term disability insurance. We believe in fair business practices that treat workers with respect and dignity, such as increasing income and job security; providing more predictability, stability, autonomy, and adequate hours in work schedules; and allowing workers to meet their family and caregiving responsibilities without being penalized by employers. We also support the development and improvement of mass transit, particularly in the rural areas of our state, to allow all Delawareans to reach their places of employment more easily.
  - c. *Organized Labor:* Delaware Democrats firmly support the right of workers to organize, to form a union if the majority so choose, and collectively bargain, regardless of where they work. Worker's rights — in particular, the right to collectively bargain for better wages and benefits have been under attack, when we should be making it easier for workers to organize. We support preserving prevailing wage laws for publicly funded construction projects. Additionally, we oppose any anti-worker, statewide "right to work" legislation or policies, any "right to work" zones, "paycheck protection" legislation, or any other legislation or policy designed specifically to diminish or weaken unions in Delaware.
  - d. *Community Workforce Agreements:* Delaware Democrats believe that taxpayer-funded community workforce agreements should include local hire

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provisions for area residents on all targeted projects, to promote inclusion and upward economic mobility.

- e. *Clean Energy Jobs*: Delaware must invest in clean energy to become more competitive nationally and globally. Delaware Democrats promote energy independence and energy efficiency. These new technologies are already transforming our state's economy, and harnessing these forces will create good paying jobs and help mitigate the effects of climate change on our state.
  - f. *Small Business*: Delaware Democrats strongly support small businesses and entrepreneurship, and we need to make it easier for them to succeed. Small businesses are engines of opportunity, particularly for minority communities. We should discard unreasonable regulations, target funding for small businesses in underserved communities, and provide tax relief and simplification to grow jobs faster in Delaware.
2. **Removing Barriers to Opportunity**: Delaware Democrats believe everyone regardless of gender, race, class, religion, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and disability, deserves the same opportunities for success and we must lift up communities that have traditionally been left behind. We must encourage greater diversity in both elected office and other positions of power and influence in our local and state governments. Our state is stronger when we work together and when people are empowered to succeed.
- a. *Combating Racism and White Supremacy*: Racism is within the foundation of every institution and aspect of our society. It is systemic and generational. For centuries racism has been written into our laws, ingrained in our business dealings, disparaging in healthcare, stifling in education and prohibitive in wealth building. Racism is a public health crisis that must be genuinely dealt with. Delaware Democrats will fight to end systematic and institutional racism throughout the state and in all facets of Delawareans' lives. We believe our public policies must promote racial justice through fair, equitable, and impactful practices — such as reparations — that encourage making amends for past inequities.
  - b. *Confronting Sexism*: Sexism is real and pervasive in all institutions. The Delaware Democratic Party is committed to ending systemic and institutional sexism throughout Delaware.
  - c. *Reforming Our Criminal Justice System*: In Delaware, we are committed to true criminal justice reform and ending mass incarceration as the entire system upholds systemic racist policies and the penal state. We support abolition of the state's death penalty, which has been applied arbitrarily and unjustly and does not deter crime. We prioritize prevention and treatment over incarceration when tackling

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addiction, substance use disorder, and mental health issues. We believe in legalizing marijuana for individuals over 21, commuting non-violent marijuana related crimes, expunging criminal records for those with marijuana related drug offenses, and ending practices that perpetuate racial profiling. Currently, our justice system criminalizes poverty through outdated policies such as cash bail as well as court-mandated fines and fees (i.e. losing a driver's license for non-driving related penalties) for those who are unable to pay them. Delaware Democrats support restorative reforms that put an end to debtors' prison policies.

- d. *Eliminating Income Inequality*: Delaware Democrats believe that everybody deserves a chance to improve their way of living. This can be done through implementing policies that increase homeownership, access to high quality jobs, career education, job training for the industries of the future and facilitating access to capital while increasing support for nascent entrepreneurs. Business incubators — particularly focused on underserved communities — could help achieve their dreams providing for themselves and their families while bringing positive economic development impact to the state.
- e. *Supporting Working Families*: We strongly support equal pay for equal work and fair wages for all, which is why we support the initiative to implement a paid parental leave program at the federal level, and will work for a similar program at the state level. The Delaware Democratic Party supports implementing a high-quality, comprehensive, and inclusive paid family and medical leave system that protects workers from the unfair choice between attending to urgent health or caretaking needs and earning a paycheck. We support at least 12 weeks of guaranteed paid family and medical leave for all workers and family units, to enable new parents to recover from childbirth and bond with their newborns, foster or adopted children, provide safe time to victims of domestic violence, paid time for families adjusting to a military deployment, and in the occurrence of the passing of a family member or loved one. We believe it is necessary to support the improvement, expansion, and affordability of high-quality childcare and the home health care workforce.
- f. *Ensuring Housing*: Delaware Democrats believe that access to safe, affordable housing is a right. In order to reduce the number of Delawareans experiencing homelessness, we believe in a Housing First policy that cares for our unhoused neighbors. We also need to grow the supply of affordable rental housing throughout the state. Finally, we support creating innovative pathways to homeownership that include education, financing, and home supply — particularly for first-time homebuyers. Homeownership is one vital way to build wealth for working families. We must also dedicate resources to building new sustainable homes and updating existing homes to be more energy efficient.

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- g. *Supporting Immigrants*: Our country was founded on the ideals of liberty and religious freedom, and our culture has been enriched by the arrival of immigrants drawn to those ideals. We believe that we must be unwavering in our aim for diversity and inclusivity. Delaware Democrats believe in cultivating a safe, welcoming community for everyone to have access to good-paying and non-exploitative jobs, quality education, and affordable housing. While understanding that our security requires the establishment and enforcement of boundaries, Delaware Democrats support preserving the historical openness of our society. Our federal government must develop comprehensive immigration reform that reflects humane practices and fairness to families while valuing the economic and cultural contributions immigrants have made and will continue to make to our communities. Immigration reform must include a pathway to citizenship.
- h. *Empowering People with Disabilities*: Delaware Democrats recognize that people with disabilities often face physical and systemic barriers that limit their access to full community inclusion. We believe that people with disabilities and their families deserve to have greater access to home and community-based services, so that individuals with physical, intellectual/developmental and mental health disabilities have appropriate health care in the community that is driven by choice and self-determination. Delawareans with disabilities have a right to better infrastructure that includes an affordable transportation system that delivers accessible sidewalks to public transportation, more affordable accessible housing and web access that meets the federal WCAG 2.2 guidelines for those who are blind or visually impaired. We stand for an education system that provides a free public education at all levels for every student in Delaware with a disability including special education. We maintain that supporting students with disabilities in the classroom, their teachers and family members is a gateway to a more successful and inclusive life as an adult. Delaware Democrats will advocate for equal opportunity employment, whether it be full-time, part-time and/or supportive employment. People with disabilities are guaranteed the right to employment opportunities for any job that they can perform the essential functions of, with or without reasonable accommodations. For those who achieve employment we support pay that is no less equal to their peers. For those who choose not to work, we support opportunities to volunteer or participate in programs of their choice with the assistance of well-paid direct support workers when needed. Delaware Democrats stand firmly for removing barriers and eliminating discrimination so that Delawareans with disabilities have the supports available to not only live independently in the community, but most importantly be a part of the community.

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- i. *Ending Poverty and Homelessness*: Delaware Democrats advocate for the elimination of persistent poverty throughout our state. We support fighting poverty by implementing policies that use targeted data to build empowerment zones, enacting anti-hunger campaigns, and supporting investment in small businesses, youth employment programs, reentry services, post-secondary education, and vocational and trade programs. We, as Democrats, need to stand up for equitable support services with a strong voice for women, children, elderly, and people who are homeless or disabled, and not assume that poverty is just being unemployed.
  - j. *Striving for LGBTQ+ Equality*: Delaware Democrats believe in full equality for LGBTQ+ people in employment, housing, public accommodations, education, and throughout life. We will continue to build on Delaware's historic progress to guarantee protections and rights for the LGBTQ+ community. Delaware Democrats will fight to ensure that Delaware remains at the forefront of equality and continues to serve as a beacon of opportunity for LGBTQ+ people across the country.
3. **Economic Accountability**: Delaware Democrats believe Delaware and America are strongest when the working class is thriving. Increasingly, economic gains are accruing disproportionately to the rich, which we believe is both corrosive to our democracy and detrimental to our economy. All means to ensure the economy works for everyone should be utilized, ranging from wage insurance to easily accessible job training programs.
  - a. *Wall Street Reform*: Financial reform is necessary to rein in Wall Street excesses. We applaud the progress made by President Obama in this area and believe we need to build on those efforts during the Biden Administration, not reverse them. Wall Street should never again be allowed to work without oversight or consequences. President Biden has a strong set of goals and policies that are designed to mitigate the inequity that is built into our economic system, curbs the abuses of Wall Street, protect consumer interests, support Social Security and retirement programs and end poverty. Delaware Democrats support these goals and policies of the Biden Administration and encourage our Democratic legislators to use these to build for economic success and fairness in Delaware.
  - b. *Strengthening of Dodd-Frank*: We believe in a balance of a vigorous effort to reduce corporate concentration and helping small businesses expand. Steadily increasing corporate concentration distorts the market and results in higher costs and less choice for consumers. Democrats believe in a competitive marketplace, not one wherein consumers suffer due to unfair pricing exercised by monopolies and near monopolies.
  - c. *Tax Code Reform*: The wealthy and corporations should pay their fair share of taxes to promote economic equality. The Delaware Democratic Party believes in a

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tax code that rewards work, promotes prosperity, and removes tax breaks for those who intensify economic inequality in our society. We believe in tax relief for working families and changes to the tax code to help families get ahead, such as a refundable tax credit. Additionally, Delaware Democrats believe in eliminating or greatly reducing the income limits seniors can earn while collecting social security before they reach full retirement age.

#### 4. **Government Transparency, Voting Rights, and Campaign Finance Reform:**

Delaware Democrats believe that a core principle of the Party is to maximize voter participation for all Delawareans. We will fight for real campaign finance reform to keep big money from drowning out the voices of everyday Delawareans, and we must have the necessary tools to fight back and safeguard our electoral and political integrity. We believe it is the government's responsibility to ensure the transparency of corporations seeking establishment in Delaware, as well as to keep Delawareans safe through strengthening our cybersecurity.

- a. *Responsible Government:* Delaware Democrats believe that every Delawarean should be confident in the stewardship of government. We need to tackle fiscal waste, fraud, and abuse to ensure government dollars are spent wisely and efficiently. Government should be well managed, open, responsive, and accountable, with particular focus on transparency in campaign finance and public officials' compensation. Delaware Democrats believe in sound fiscal practices, with public access at all levels to government financial records.
- b. *Voting Rights:* Ensuring and expanding the right to vote is a core value of Delaware Democrats. We believe that we should make it easier to vote by expanding early voting and voting by mail, automatically registering citizens to vote, implementing same day voter registration, and ending partisan and racial gerrymandering. Democrats are dedicated to fighting against efforts to suppress minority turnout through discriminatory voter identification laws.
- c. *Campaign Finance:* We support constitutional amendments to overturn Citizens' United and Buckley v. Valeo. We need to amplify the voices of the American people through a small donor matching public financing system. We need to overhaul and strengthen the Federal Election Commission so that there is real enforcement of campaign finance laws. And we need to fight to eliminate super PACs and outside spending abuses, including transparency of donors.
- d. *Transparency of Corporate Entities & LLCs:* National security officials have warned against potential secret ownership of companies in critical areas such as energy production, electric grids, communications and transportation infrastructure. There is also major concern about the use of Limited Liability companies to secretly launder funds to be used by terrorist and other criminal

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groups. Delaware Democrats support revisions of State Corporate Law to require screening and identification of all persons and nations seeking to establish an LLC under Delaware statutes.

- e. *Cybersecurity*: Delaware Democrats understand the need to strengthen our cybersecurity to address email privacy, social media privacy, private records, including medical records, and provide protection from hacking. We will seek to establish global norms in cyberspace and impose consequences on those who violate the rules. We will do this while protecting the privacy and civil liberties of the American people.
5. **Climate Change and Environmental Justice**: Delaware Democrats share a deep commitment to protecting our environment and tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions using clean energy and energy independence. Energy efficiency is good for the economy and good for our environment. We are committed to supporting energy efficient and sustainable public transportation, businesses, homes, and farms.
- a. *Clean Energy Development and Implementation*: The Delaware Democratic Party supports efforts to transition our energy supply to distributed and centralized renewable sources. We recognize the critical need for requiring existing generation facilities to meet environmental standards and to offer incentives to decrease transportation energy needs. New and innovative jobs in the environmental and energy sectors will also need apprenticeship opportunities to ensure a well-trained workforce. We must make our existing infrastructure safer and cleaner, while also building the infrastructure necessary to power clean energy, including solar and wind energy.
  - b. *Environmental Justice*: Delaware Democrats believe in the right to clean air and water for all Americans. We understand that climate change and pollution disproportionately affect low-income communities and communities of color. We support all efforts to ensure these communities are not further burdened with the effects of more pollution, and that we take every effort to reduce the existing pollution. We need to prioritize hiring and training workers to clean up the toxic brownfields that have polluted our state, and seek opportunities to return these sites to productive, economic use. Delaware must move towards a zero-emission through zoning and land use reform, and other regulations. The Delaware Democratic Party supports more cleanup requirements when any commercial property is proposed for residential development and holding companies and corporations accountable. We must build an equitable and competitive clean energy economy that puts workers and communities first and leaves no one behind by incentivizing and building on clean energy, energy efficiency and resilient infrastructure.



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- f. *Equitable Funding*: We recognize that many Delaware schools have disproportionately high numbers of students who are economically-disadvantaged. Delaware Democrats are committed to ensuring that schools that educate children in poverty are treated fairly, and that weighted, needs-based formula funding is used based on the number of students living in poverty, students in special education, and English Language Learners. High poverty schools require targeted and focused funding to ensure all students achieve success and all teachers have necessary resources for their classrooms.
  - g. *Support Our Educators*: We need to ensure that teachers are incentivized to work in high-needs areas. Delaware Democrats support accountability that improves the many achievement gaps facing students from low-income communities. We support policies that motivate and reward rather than demoralize our educators.
7. **Keeping Delawareans Healthy Through a Comprehensive Approach**: Delaware Democrats strongly believe in universal health care coverage. Healthcare is a right, not a privilege for the few who can afford it. We are proud of being the Party of Medicare, Medicaid, the Children’s Health Insurance Program and the Affordable Care Act. We need to build on these achievements, not weaken or gut them, and move closer to a universal health care while improving quality and reducing costs in the healthcare system. Delaware Democrats believe in reproductive rights and in promoting women’s health. Coming out of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, our Party supports science-based guidance from state and federal government agencies on responding to public health emergencies.
- a. *Universal Health Care*: Delaware Democrats understand health care and health care coverage are basic human rights. Americans pay vastly more for healthcare and healthcare coverage than any other people on Earth and yet we have steadily declining life expectancies, unconscionable health inequities, and poor health outcomes for these exorbitantly high costs and prices. All Americans deserve affordable, accessible, equitable health care coverage, irrespective of their race, gender, income, religion, or sexual orientation.
  - b. *Drug/Alcohol Addiction Services*: The plight of drug and alcohol abuse is ravaging many communities across the state, and we must enact safeguards for those affected by this public health crisis. Delaware Democrats believe in continuing and expanding efforts in Delaware to tackle these problems, including applying aggressive preventative education and early intervention measures, as well as expansion of addiction treatment programming and resources. We recognize that addiction is a mental health and a behavioral health issue — and does not need to be a criminal matter. We support legislation that allows individuals to get access to the help they need, rather than entering the criminal justice system.

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- c. *Mental Health Care*: Delaware Democrats recognize that good mental health is critical to all people, including the homeless, and therefore we must treat mental health issues with the same care and seriousness that we treat physical health issues and work to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health care. It is also imperative that we expand community-based treatment for mental health conditions and substance abuse disorders and create awareness about suicide prevention.
- d. *Reproductive Rights*: We support a woman's right to make healthcare decisions for herself and in consultation with her healthcare provider, including decisions concerning contraception and abortion. Delaware Democrats also support the right of all women to access appropriate healthcare. We oppose efforts to limit access to healthcare services and to defund reproductive and women's health care providers, and recognize that affordable birth control should be expanded, especially in more rural areas of the state. The ACA prohibition on gender-based discrimination by health insurers must be preserved.

**9. Making Delaware a Safe Place for All Its Residents:** Democrats appreciate the necessity in prioritizing public safety and understand how a compassionate justice system adds to its success. We know that our approach to public safety must be comprehensive and conscious of historic inequities. We seek to rebuild the bonds of trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve through meaningful partnerships and collaborative reforms. We must combat violence against women and work to reduce gun violence — especially the urban gun violence epidemic in our biggest cities — through the passage of common sense gun safety laws and a continued emphasis on prevention.

- a. *Treating Gun Violence as a Public Health Crisis*: Gun violence is a public health crisis in Delaware, and demands a public health — and not merely a public safety — solution. Delaware Democrats support common sense gun safety measures while respecting reasonable gun ownership and the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding, responsible gun owners. To that end, we support strong prevention policies such as implementing a permit to purchase system, regulating ghost guns, disarming domestic abusers, and reducing firearm magazine capacity — and the funding to successfully implement them. We recognize that the safest states are ones with strong laws that support well-run community intervention programs that embody a collective, grassroots, and preventative approach. Delaware Democrats acknowledge the epidemic of gun violence, will ensure investment in community-led violence intervention models with proven evidenced-based programming, street outreach and hospital-based violence intervention programs, as well as supporting investment in community cultural services, robust educational resources, and concise communication with the community.

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- b. *Police Reform*: Delaware Democrats believe in transparency and accountability for all police officers in the state. Reforms supported by the Party include requiring the use of body cameras; ending practices that perpetuate racial profiling; creating Civilian Review Boards to offer community oversight on police misconduct and use of force violations; releasing law enforcement disciplinary records to the public; implementing a statewide use of force standard; require that new technologies are fairly implemented and used without racial and gender bias; and requiring agencies to record and publish data on use of force incidents. We believe in ensuring that law enforcement agencies have the resources needed to implement much-needed reforms while addressing crime and tying these increases to accountability mechanisms to make it easier to remove problem officers from the force. We will work to repeal the Law Enforcement Officer Bill of Rights, which will help to ensure racial justice in our state and will help to repair relationships between communities of color and the police.
  - c. *Ending Violence Against Women*: Delaware, home of the author of the Violence Against Women Act, must be committed to combating violence against women. We also believe in the eradication of all forms of human trafficking and modern slavery, including the commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor of men, women, and children. We need to ensure protections and services for survivors of violence and trafficking, and implement measures to ensure that we are not criminalizing the victim and that all victims receive the care they need to make a fresh start.
10. **Support Troops and Care for Veterans**: Delaware Democrats believe we have moral responsibility to keep faith with all our veterans and wounded warriors. We are committed to helping our veterans achieve their educational goals, and support reducing barriers to veteran entrepreneurship. We also support measures to combat waste, corruption, and dysfunction in the federal Department of Veterans Affairs. We must take care of those who put their lives on the line to defend us.
- a. *Expand Military Family Services*: Delaware Democrats honor the sacrifice of military families who serve alongside our service members. We will support military families with jobs, education, childcare, and health care. We will promote family-friendly policies and champion efforts to care for our military family members, especially for the spouses and children who must rebuild their lives after the loss of a loved one or life-altering injury or disability. We must expand services and programs for veterans, especially women, whose needs are often overlooked during and after their service.
  - b. *Care for Veterans*: Delaware Democrats will fight for every veteran to have timely access to high-quality health care and processing of claims and appeals. We are

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committed to taking veteran mental health seriously, including PTSD, addiction, and suicide, and providing resources to injured veterans, including those suffering from mental health injuries.

- c. *Assistance Programs for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness*: Delaware Democrats believe we should provide resources to fight the chronic issues of veterans homelessness and protect them from the dire circumstances that tend to follow and pervade such conditions.