



Montana Democratic Party Platform 2010

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Agriculture and Rural Development

Family farming and ranching affects all economic activity in Montana, is an important part of our cultural heritage, and has made agriculture our state's largest industry. It must be enhanced through public policies that make it financially possible to improve family-oriented agricultural production. These include fair prices; improved trade policies; value-added enterprise, including the production of renewable fuels and alternative energy; market promotion; community education; availability of credit; and reasonably priced transportation.

Agriculture Plank Appendix

We recognize that agriculture is our state's largest industry and directly or indirectly affects all economic activity in our state. The small town rural way of life in Montana is particularly threatened by the ongoing crisis in agriculture. There is increasing anxiety over the number of family farmers and ranchers who have undergone bankruptcy or foreclosure and left the community because they can no longer earn a living in agriculture.

We support agricultural policies designed to promote and enhance a decentralized, sustainable, community-based family farm system of agriculture, as opposed to the centralized, globalized, and industrialized model of agriculture. It is crucial that measures be taken to assure farmers and ranchers opportunities for profit supported by fair trade policies, value-added enterprise, market promotion, country of origin labeling, availability of credit and fair prices. We believe that in order for the farmer and rancher to survive, transportation for inputs and commodities must be competitive and reasonably priced.

Family farming and ranching is a valuable economic, social and cultural institution, which must be preserved through public policies that make it financially possible to sustain the family-oriented agricultural production so vital to our state. Public agricultural policies should be modified to include a financial security net with a goal of no net loss in the population of family agriculture producers. We support legislation that will enhance food security and maintain fair market access by curtailing the concentration of US agricultural production by multi-national corporations.

While current agricultural policies discourage continued ownership of farms and ranches by subsequent generations of Montana farm and ranch families, we support a combination of progressive land use and tax policies, as well as finance laws to encourage the transfer of agricultural operations from parents to children or to new family farm and ranch owners.

We recognize that farmers and ranchers are the natural stewards of the land and that they have a responsibility to develop a productive, manageable, and sustainable approach to the preservation of natural resources for future generations. Since private property rights are a matter of civility and respect, eminent domain laws need to be addressed in order to protect all property rights equally. To promote the best possible management of public lands, we encourage the implementation of procedures to provide for reasonable fees, rental rates, and practices.

A goal of our educational institutions should be to prepare our current and future agricultural producers for the dramatic changes, emerging technologies, and the economic challenges facing agriculture. We support sufficient funding of state institutions of higher learning doing agriculture research, the Agricultural Experiment Stations, the Cooperative Extension Service, and related agricultural youth programs including but not limited to 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA) and Agriculture in Montana Schools.

Agriculture Plank Resolutions Reaffirmed

Market Promotion

WHEREAS, the nature of agricultural markets is changing and becoming more international; and

WHEREAS, competitiveness requires aggressive international trade;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports active investments in aggressive market promotion of Montana agricultural commodities.

Cooperative Development

WHEREAS, cooperatives have historically enabled farmers and ranchers to meet the economic challenges presented by geographic isolation and market forces beyond their control; and

WHEREAS, cooperatives enable individuals to pool their resources with others sufficient to capitalize an enterprise; and

WHEREAS, community-based cooperatives may be an effective vehicle to foster the creation of value-added enterprises in our rural communities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports dedicating resources to the Montana Cooperative Development Center.

State Hail Insurance and Grain Labs

WHEREAS, the State Hail Insurance Program is a self-sustaining entity and sets the standards for private insurance; and

WHEREAS, the state grain labs guarantee the integrity of the grain grading system which is an important factor in buying and selling of grain in this state;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party encourages the State of Montana to provide sufficient funding and to adamantly oppose privatization of these state agencies.

All-Risk Crop Insurance

WHEREAS, farmers sustain increased economic risk due to increasing costs and increased variable weather conditions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports improving and expanding the USDA all-risk crop insurance program.

Agricultural Support

WHEREAS, agriculture is one of Montana's largest and most important industries; and

WHEREAS, the family farms, ranches, and the rural businesses that support them are cornerstones of Montana's social, economic, and cultural heritage; and

WHEREAS, agricultural support through subsidies, promotion, and credit financing is of vital importance to beginning and established farmers and ranchers; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Democratic Party also encourages and supports non-traditional or alternative farming and ranching methods;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party urges the state of Montana and the United States government to provide financial support, marketing assistance, and credit financing targeting Montana family farms and rural businesses.

Conditions for Commercial Introduction of Genetically Engineered Wheat into Montana

WHEREAS, most countries that are major customers for Montana wheat exports have indicated that they will not purchase Montana wheat if it becomes contaminated with genetically engineered wheat; and

WHEREAS, serious liability questions related to the growing, selling, and distribution of genetically engineered wheat remain unresolved, such as pollen drift and the lack of a distribution system that is capable of segregating genetically engineered wheat from natural wheat;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports immediate measures to protect Montana's valuable natural wheat from genetic contamination that could result in loss of export markets; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports measures to protect Montana's family farmers from unreasonable liability resulting from the introduction of genetically engineered crops and maintain their independent production rights.

Agriculture Antitrust Enforcement

WHEREAS, agriculture is the number one sector of Montana's economy and the ripple effect of poor commodity prices is felt throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, the retail price of commodities does not reflect the low prices agriculture producers are receiving; and

WHEREAS, there have been calls for antitrust enforcement to reduce the monopolistic power of multinational corporations;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party requests Congress continue to investigate and conduct field hearings on commodity manipulation and the effectiveness of antitrust enforcement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports the efforts of the USDA and US DOJ and Montana Attorney General Bullock in investigating and rigorously enforcing federal antitrust laws in the agriculture sector including, but not limited to the Packers and Stockyards Act.

Freight rates

WHEREAS, Montana farmers are captive shippers; and

WHEREAS, Montana lacks competitive grain transportation; and

WHEREAS, all railroads are shipping grain from Midwest markets to the west coast at lower rates than Montana grain;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Montana Democratic Party demands that all railroads offer fair shipping rates to Montana farmers, or be subject to regulation as a rail monopoly; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Montana Democratic Party supports efforts of Montana Attorney General Bullock in negotiating and securing fair and competitive railroad shipping rates for agricultural and other commodities.

Trade Resolution on Agriculture and Food Security

WHEREAS, the Montana Democratic Party believes that rules governing international trade must allow countries to give priority to sustaining family farms and achieving global food security;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that rules for the global economy should:

- Discourage excessive economic concentration in agricultural markets and prevent the manipulation of global food supplies, and the depression of farm prices that can threaten food security, and the survival of family farmers in the United States and around the world; and
- Allow for vigorous enforcement of antitrust laws at the local, regional, national, and international levels to guarantee competitive markets for family farmers; and
- Allow nations to establish domestic and global reserves, manage supply, enforce anti-dumping disciplines and ensure fair market prices; and
- Allow nations to ensure the production and distribution of a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply to meet their domestic needs and achieve food security.

Electrical Deregulation

WHEREAS, a large part of Montana's agriculture production is on irrigated land; and

WHEREAS, much of irrigation water is pumped with electricity; and

WHEREAS, electrical deregulation has drastically increased the price of electricity, driving up production costs;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party rejects electrical deregulation and advocates the re-establishment of a stable and affordable supply of electricity.

Advanced Biofuels Production

WHEREAS, Montana's economy depends on agriculture; and

WHEREAS, biofuels such as biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol potentially offer a cleaner, faster, renewable approach to improve Montana's air quality, build real long-lasting prosperity across the State, reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and combat global warming; and

WHEREAS, renewable agricultural commodities can be converted into biodiesel and cellulosic ethanol, thereby increasing commodity prices and creating needed construction and operating jobs; and

WHEREAS, Montana farmers can produce advanced biofuels that don't compete with food production;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic party supports a comprehensive plan to develop technologies to develop fuel cellulosic ethanol production; and

BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports the creation of a sustainable biofuels industry in Montana through programs such as WIRED and believe that our state and local governments should play an integral role in fostering the development of this industry by procuring biofuels and biofuel blends for state and local fleet vehicles;

Brucellosis

WHEREAS the health of Montana's livestock industry is critical to the state's economy and agricultural heritage; and

WHEREAS the presence of brucellosis in wildlife in Yellowstone National Park and the greater area threatens the state's disease-free status;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports the methods of management by which Montana's livestock industry can maintain its disease-free status.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Montana Democratic Party supports a long-term global solution that works to eradicate the disease in both livestock and wildlife.

Support for Locally Grown Foods

WHEREAS, in 1950, 70% of the food Montanans consumed was produced in the state and today that figure is 10%; and

WHEREAS, most food products now consumed in Montana travel an average of 1500 miles and are handled by an estimated 50 people prior to consumption; and

WHEREAS, for each percent more that we eat of Montana-produced foods, we add about \$30 million to the state's economy according to the Montana Extension Service;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana Democratic Party strongly supports extending Montana's capacity to produce, package and distribute a wider range of locally grown food and enthusiastically supports programs including but not limited to the Farm to School, Farm to College, Farm to Table programs; community supported agriculture; community gardens; and Farmers Markets.

In support of relaxation of the economic trade embargo with Cuba

WHEREAS, agricultural production is Montana's number one industry, the Montana Democratic Party supports the relaxation of the economic trade embargo with Cuba as it would provide an important market for family farms and ranches to sell their goods; and

WHEREAS, Montana Democrats join every agricultural advocacy group in our state in pushing for the relaxation of the economic trade embargo with Cuba; and

WHEREAS, we support lifting the embargo as Cuba imports over one million tons of wheat every year and the island nation's eleven million residents could be potential consumers for Montana's farmers and ranchers; and

WHEREAS, we reaffirm our support for Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester's position that a relaxation of the economic trade embargo with Cuba would benefit Montana's family farms and ranches; and

WHEREAS, we urge other members of our Congressional Delegation who have changed their views on this important issue to reconsider their conversion and return to supporting Montana's number one industry, agricultural production;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that Montana Democrats strongly support the relaxation of the economic trade embargo with Cuba as it would benefit Montana's family farmers and ranchers and the overall economy of our state.

Federal Estate Tax

WHEREAS, uncertainty in the current federal estate tax regulation does continue to adversely affect the economic viability of Montana's farmers, ranchers, and small businesspeople; and

WHEREAS, a rational and consistent federal estate tax system is essential to effective business planning and family-based business sustainability;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports the renewal of the Federal Estate Tax provisions, to maintain the current federal estate tax exemption levels.

Implementing Federal Healthcare Reform Laws

WHEREAS, 1 in 5 rural Montana's farmers and ranchers currently do not have and cannot afford health insurance; and

WHEREAS, health insurance premiums of individual farmers, ranchers, and small businesses in the open market are currently unaffordable; and

WHEREAS, more Montana farmers, ranchers and small businesspeople will seek bankruptcy protection due to unpaid medical bills than will be adversely impacted by federal estate taxes;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports implementing state legislation which will create a strong and broad-based state health care exchange, providing a minimum basic level of healthcare coverage and affordable health insurance options; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports implementing state legislation which provides authority to the Commissioner of Securities and Insurance to investigate health insurance companies' operations and regulate the profits of those companies.

American Indian

We support the sovereign status of the Indian Nations and are committed to recognizing their self-governance and self-determination to preserve their way of life within their individual tribal structures. We, as Democrats, promote recommendations to advance the socioeconomic condition of American Indians in urban areas and on Indian reservations by pledging to advocate for and support legislation, adequate funding, and policies, that will provide for equity in educational quality and achievement, increase parity in employment, protect natural resources, ensure equity in justice, and respect the government-to-government relationship with the State of Montana.

American Indian Plank Appendix

Sovereignty

We unequivocally support and respect sovereignty as the unique and historical government-to-government relationship between the federal government, Montana State government, and American Indian Nations. This relationship encompasses the rights of self-governance, self-determination, cultural preservation, religious freedom, and of meeting trust obligations included within treaties and executive orders. We will actively oppose any federal or state efforts to diminish tribal sovereignty.

We shall implement an ongoing American Indian educational process within the Montana Democratic Party, emphasizing sovereignty, education, and human rights. Each county's Central Committee shall offer, at the minimum, one program a year on American Indian issues, with support offered by the Montana Indian Democrats and Montana Democratic Party through distribution of relevant materials.

Education

We affirm Article X, Section 1, Number (2) of the Montana State Constitution, which states: "The state recognizes the distinct and unique cultural heritage of the American Indians and is committed in its educational goals to the preservation of their cultural integrity," and support the ongoing implementation of the Indian Education for All Act with ongoing funding in all of Montana's educational entities as mandated by the Constitution, statute, and court decisions. The Montana Democratic Party supports the necessary funding for implementation of Indian Education for All as determined through consultation with native communities throughout the state.

We recognize that there is a wide disparity of educational achievement and student retention between Indian and non-Indian students and support ongoing funding for programs and services that will address these issues.

We recognize the importance of Tribal Colleges in providing a vital part of the higher education services to all Montana citizens, both Indian and non-Indian, and support continued state funding of non-beneficiary students who attend these Tribal Colleges at an adequate level with the state's community colleges.

Awareness

We recognize the importance of and the need for education concerning tribal sovereignty and Indian culture to promote respect for diversity and tolerance among all people in Montana.

Tribal/State Government Relations

We recognize all Indian Nations in Montana as sovereign nations. We shall consult with tribal leaders and members prior to proposing or supporting legislation/policy that impacts Indian Nations.

We will honor all court decisions, contracts, and agreements between federal or state government and all Indian Nations.

We support MCA § 2-15-108 (Gender and Racial Balance law) that encourages the ongoing appointment of American Indians on all boards, commissions, and committees in state, county, and local governments to provide equitable and fair representation in these policy and decision-making authorities.

The state will distribute funds equitably to assure that American Indians in Montana receive their fair share of appropriate funds.

We strongly support the concept of cooperative agreement between the State of Montana government agencies and the Indian Nations of Montana.

Urban Indian/State Relations

The Democratic Party will support the needs and issues of urban Indians in Montana and promote policy, legislation, and funding that will address their needs and issues.

Religious and Cultural Rights

We strongly support the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, the Repatriation Act, and similar federal legislation. We advocate the protection of American Indian sacred and religious grounds. We support the rights of institutionalized and/or incarcerated American Indians to have access to cultural and religious resources.

Health and Human Services

We recognize the unique cultural and socioeconomic needs of American Indians, reservation and urban, and we urge the executive branch of state government to continue to ensure the equitable and fair delivery of social services, mental health needs, and quality, affordable health care.

We will support exclusive tribal court jurisdiction over all Indian children and urge state courts to honor and transfer proceedings involving Indian children to tribal courts according to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

We will urge the inclusion of culturally sensitive training for all providers of health and social services within the state of Montana.

Natural Resources

We are committed to honor and encourage enforcement of the right of tribal governments to regulate and manage their air quality, natural resources, and protect their sacred and cultural sites, both on and off reservation lands.

We will support the Clean Water Act and honor the water rights of Indian Nations in Montana.

Economic Development

We support an ongoing equitable and fair employment plan that will increase the number of Indian employees at all levels within state government from its current inequitable rate.

We will work proactively for economic development on the seven Indian Reservations and the Little Shell Band in Montana, and we will participate in all economic committees and programs.

We support tribal participation in tourism efforts in coordination with state and local tourism departments.

We urge state government to achieve an equitable distribution of state and federal contracts to minority businesses to comply with federal laws. We support the

development and implementation of job training programs for Indians on and off reservations.

We support good-faith negotiation on tribal-state compacts, including Indian gaming compacts.

Taxation

We recognize the right of self-government and self-determination of Indian Nations as stated in the Indian Self-Determination Act, the Indian Tax Act and the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934.

The state will distribute funds equitably to assure that American Indians in Montana receive their fair share of appropriate funds. Intergovernmental tax agreements should ensure that tax revenues generated on Indian reservations stay on the reservation to support reservation economies and fund essential services provided by tribal governments.

Voting Rights

We applaud the recent Montana redistricting efforts and other activities, including legal efforts by tribes in our counties that have enhanced participation by American Indians in the electoral process as well as increased the number of American Indians in the Montana Legislature. We support the continuation of the Voting Rights Act, which has been critical in insuring the voting rights of Indian people. We support the continued efforts of the Montana Democratic Party in its work to ensure equity in political participation of American Indians in all elected and appointed capacities including school boards, county governments, city governments, and other policy-making boards and commissions.

Justice

We are extremely concerned with the disproportionate number of American Indians incarcerated in Montana's correctional system and will work with appropriate state departments as well as Tribal communities in Montana to assure justice in the judgment and sentencing process that will reduce this inequitable representation.

We recognize the positive effects of alternatives to incarceration. We encourage the expansion of the use of family, drug, DUI, and mental health courts.

We will urge the inclusion of culturally sensitive training for the judicial system, the court system, and their employees.

We support bringing to resolution the Indian Trust Lawsuit, and further support full federal funding for adequate restitution.

Federal Responsibilities to Tribes

We strongly support adequate funding for programs and services that are federal responsibilities to American Indian Tribes.

We will advocate equitable state and federal funding for all Indian programs. We will work to ensure that federal funds generated by state statistics be distributed equitably to Indian programs.

Recruitment and American Indian Representation

We celebrate the strengths that are within the American Indian culture. We will actively seek and promote the involvement of American Indian Democratic members and candidates at all levels of government and within the Democratic Party.

American Indian Resolutions

Continued Funding for Non-Indians at Tribal Colleges

WHEREAS, the participation of non-Indians at tribal colleges in Montana is increasing; and

WHEREAS, each Reservation in Montana has a tribal college; and

WHEREAS, the state currently provides funding for non-Indian students and students who are not enrolled in a federally recognized tribe (non-beneficiary) attending tribal colleges in Montana;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports funding for non-beneficiaries attending tribal colleges in Montana at parity with public community colleges of the Montana University System.

Support of the Little Shell Tribe of the Chippewa Indians

WHEREAS, the Little Shell Band of the Chippewa is undergoing the required review process for Federal recognition;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports the Little Shell Band of the Chippewa in their pursuit for Federal recognition.

In Support of Sovereignty Awareness

WHEREAS, the Montana Democratic Party recognizes that the basis of American Indian concerns can be addressed by the understanding of tribal sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, the tribes in Montana possess the understanding of tribal sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, elected officials of the Montana Democratic Party need to understand and respect tribal sovereignty;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party, with the assistance of the tribes in Montana, will sponsor orientation for elected officials to provide understanding of tribal sovereignty.

American Indian Funding in Block Grants

WHEREAS, the federal government has certain responsibilities to the tribes; and

WHEREAS, the federal government may be considering block grants to fund certain programs in Montana;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party will advocate appropriate funding for American Indian entities from the block grants and will support direct tribal funding.

Montana Advisory Council for Indian Education (MACIE)

WHEREAS, the Montana Democratic Party is committed to quality education for all Montana citizens;

WHEREAS, Montana's Indian people have unique educational needs; and

WHEREAS, effective and quality American Indian education can only be accomplished with adequate, ongoing funding of the Montana Advisory Council for Indian Education to support research, curriculum development, and other Indian education efforts;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports adequate ongoing funding of the Montana Advisory Council for Indian Education.

Dialogues on Race and Diversity

The Montana Democratic Party supports local, regional, and state dialogue on the issue of racism, particularly highlighting Montana Indian concerns.

Montana Indian Educational Achievement

WHEREAS, the Montana Democratic Party is committed to quality education for all Montana citizens; and

WHEREAS, Indians in Montana's student achievement levels are far below the national and state averages as reported in recent standardized test score results in our public schools and Indians in Montana's drop-out rates far exceed the national and state averages by a ratio of three to one (or more), which negatively impact the opportunity for success in college scholarships, jobs, and economic growth; and

WHEREAS, The State of Montana took significant steps forward in 2005 in setting policy and providing funding to address these educational disparities; and

WHEREAS, it is vital that schools utilize this funding for its intended purposes in order to address these disparities;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party urges the Governor's office, Montana's educational leadership, including the Board of Public Education, the Office of Public Instruction, and the Montana State Legislature to continue the support of these efforts in funding and developing programs.

Montana Indian Education for all

WHEREAS, the State of Montana took historic steps forward in 2005 in providing first-time funding for Indian Education for All in our K-12 educational systems in recognition of our state's constitutional commitment in Article X, Section 1, part 2 of the Montana Constitution, to meet the definition of a quality education as outlined in SB 152, and to meet the concerns outlined in Montana Supreme Court decisions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, public schools in Montana should have adequate funding to implement Indian Education for All through professional development, purchase of culturally relevant materials, develop curriculum, and other activities that will help all Montana students learn about American Indians of Montana and that it is vital that these schools use this funding for its intended purpose.

Support for the Montana Indian Tribes receiving a share of the expected tobacco settlement

WHEREAS, the Indian tribes represent eight percent of Montana's population; and

WHEREAS, the Indians pay taxes as part of Montana's population; and

WHEREAS, economic success for the tribes is essential to the general health of the state; and

WHEREAS, the tribes have significant and often unique needs for development and funding of programs for education, health care, employment and income;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana State Democratic Party goes on record in support of the Indian tribes of Montana receiving a share of the tobacco settlement.

Reaffirming Commitment to the Tribal Justice System

WHEREAS, an independent tribal court system is essential to the sovereignty of Indian Nations; and

WHEREAS, there is a concern the Montana court system does not recognize tribal court orders;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party reaffirms its commitment to tribal sovereignty and the independence of the tribal court system, and pledges its opposition to allowing state courts jurisdiction over disputes on tribal land; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party recommends the Montana justice system accord full faith and credit to tribal court orders.

Support for Home Ownership Opportunities for Tribal Members Residing on Indian Reservations in Montana

WHEREAS, tribal members residing on Indian reservations in Montana have historically been denied the same mortgage lending opportunities enjoyed by those residing off-reservation; and

WHEREAS, in the Community Development Banking and Financial Institutions Act (1994), Congress found that "many of the Nation's urban, rural, and Native American communities face critical social and economic problems arising in part from the lack of economic growth, people living in poverty, and the lack of employment and other economic opportunities;" and

WHEREAS, many communities located on Indian lands in Montana face economic and social challenges that place them significantly behind the rest of the United States economy and in Montana; and

WHEREAS, there are a number of explanations why home ownership opportunities and mortgage lending have not been readily available to Indian reservations in Montana, such as a lack of access to capital and financial services on Indian reservations, that contribute to the investment gap;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports the continued efforts by Indian tribes and tribal members in Montana to eliminate the historical investment gap and improve the opportunities for home ownership and mortgage lending on Indian reservations in Montana.

Honoring our American Indian Women by Stopping the Violence

WHEREAS, in the United States, national statistics indicate that a woman is raped every six minutes and a woman is beaten every 18 minutes

WHEREAS, domestic violence is the leading cause of injury among women of reproductive age in the United States; and

WHEREAS, between 22 and 35 percent of women who visit emergency rooms are there because of domestic violence; and

WHEREAS, this level of violence against American Indian women in the United States is even more alarming in light of a recent report by Amnesty International discovering that sexual violence against indigenous women in the USA is widespread—and especially brutal. According to US government statistics, Native American and Alaska Native women are more than 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than other women in the USA; and

WHEREAS, according to the US Department of Justice, in at least 86 per cent of the reported cases of rape or sexual assault against American Indian and Alaska Native women, survivors report that the perpetrators are non-Native men; and

WHEREAS, federal government studies have consistently shown that Native American and Alaska Native women experience much higher levels of sexual violence than other women in the United States And, according to the US Department of Justice, more than 1 in 3 Native American and Alaska Native women will be raped during their lifetime, and indigenous women are being denied protection and there is a systematic failure to punish those responsible for these crimes; and

WHEREAS, treaties, the US Constitution and federal law affirm a unique political and legal relationship between federally recognized tribal nations and the federal government; and

WHEREAS, there are more than 550 federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes in the USA, and federally recognized Indian tribes are sovereign under US law, with jurisdiction over their citizens and land and maintaining government to government relationships with each other and with the US federal government; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has a legal responsibility to ensure protection of the rights and well-being of Native American and Alaska Native peoples; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has a unique legal relationship to the tribal nations that includes a trust responsibility to assist tribal governments in safeguarding the lives of Indian women; and

WHEREAS, tribal law enforcement agencies are chronically under-funded—federal and state governments provide significantly fewer resources for law enforcement on tribal land than are provided for comparable non-Native communities. The lack of appropriate training in all police forces—federal, state and tribal—also undermines survivors' right to justice. Many officers don't have the skills to ensure a full and accurate crime report. Survivors of sexual violence are not guaranteed access to adequate and timely sexual assault forensic examinations which is caused in part by the federal government's severe under-funding of the Indian Health Service; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Government has also undermined the authority of tribal governments to respond to crimes committed on tribal land. Women who come forward to report sexual violence are caught in a jurisdictional maze that federal, state and tribal police often cannot quickly sort out. Three justice systems—tribal, state and federal—are potentially involved in responding to sexual violence; and

WHEREAS, due to the jurisdictional issues, there can be significant delays while police, lawyers and courts establish who has jurisdiction over a particular crime. The result can be such confusion and uncertainty that no one intervenes and survivors of sexual violence are denied access to justice; and

WHEREAS, tribal prosecutors cannot prosecute crimes committed by non-Native perpetrators and tribal courts are also prohibited from passing custodial sentences that are in keeping with the seriousness of the crimes of rape or other forms of sexual violence. The maximum prison sentence tribal courts can impose for crimes, including rape, is one year. At the same time, the majority of rape cases on

tribal lands that are referred to the federal courts are reportedly never brought to trial; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence of all these things, Indigenous women are being denied justice and the perpetrators are going unpunished.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MONTANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY, that the inherent sovereignty of Tribes as recognized through historical treaties and legal relationships that exist between Tribal Nations and the United States of America is undeniable; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Montana Democratic Party is calling on the US government, state and tribal governments to take the first steps to end sexual violence against American Indian women by the following policies:

- a. Work in collaboration with American Indian women to obtain a clear and accurate understanding about the prevalence and nature of sexual violence against Indigenous women.
- b. Ensure that American Indian women have access to adequate and timely sexual assault forensic examinations without charge to the survivor.
- c. Provide resources to Indian tribes for additional criminal justice and victim prevention and intervention services to respond to crimes of sexual violence against American Indian women.
- d. Support state and national legislation aimed at protecting American Indian women.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Montana Democratic Party encourages the state of Montana to follow Article 4 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which stipulates that “States should exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons.”

The Environment, Natural Resources and Energy

We support the constitutional right of Montanans to a clean and healthful environment. A healthy environment and a strong economy go hand in hand. Responsible and sustainable utilization of our natural resources should be the guiding principle. Montana's energy policy must ensure affordable, reliable, environmentally sound energy resources with a priority for Montana residences and businesses. Constructive responses to climate change are imperative.

The Environment, Natural Resources and Energy Plank Appendix

Quality of Life, Now and in the Future

Having been endowed with one of the most magnificent natural environments on earth, we Montanans affirm our moral responsibility, enshrined in our state constitution's guarantee of a clean and healthful environment, to ensure that future generations inherit a Montana as pristine and bountiful as the one we have been privileged to enjoy. We support legal protection for the care of the natural environment so that Montana remains a clean, healthful, and inspirational place to live, raise a family, work, and play. We support the responsible utilization of our natural resources.

The Environment and Economic Stability

We believe a healthy environment and a sustained, healthy economy go hand in hand. It is far-sighted and cost-effective public policy to protect the environment now rather than burden our children with the extraordinary costs of environmental restoration and remediation, and resource depletion in the future.

As part of this commitment, we recognize the role of extractive industries in Montana's economy and strongly believe that their activities must be conducted with the utmost respect for the environment and sustainable communities. The health and integrity of our environment must be maintained, including the pristine nature of wild places. Those components of our environment that have been degraded must be restored or remediated for present and future generations, providing enhanced human and ecological health, and developing a restoration economy supporting quality high-paying jobs. We believe the primary responsible parties should share the costs. We believe in the interconnectedness of Montana's economy, quality of life and utilization of our natural resources.

Tourism

We affirm that our glorious natural environment is a significant basis for Montana's thriving and growing tourism industry and that its preservation is central to our state's economic future.

Environmental Cooperation

We support the management of our natural resources with the participation and cooperation of all levels of government, tribal government, business, and the public.

We recognize that a trained and dedicated environmental, natural resource, and public health work force is a valuable commodity.

We support the retention of educated and experienced employees, to support the right of employees to an honest, open and respectful work place, and to protect employees from retribution, discrimination or illegal personnel actions.

Local governments should be allowed and encouraged to develop protection ordinances suited to the communities' needs. Citizen involvement at all levels is essential to ensure that the environmental regulatory process is conducted in an open and fair manner. We subscribe to the principle that public participation also leads to more effective and efficient enforcement of environmental standards.

Private Land, Sprawl and Growth Policy

We recognize the importance of private property rights. We also recognize the importance of subdivision regulations, transportation, and local land use planning. These public processes should be in place so that we maintain open space, private forestry, family agriculture and conduct economically and environmentally sustainable community development. We must protect valuable farmlands, productive wildlife habitat, wetlands and riparian resources as well as landscapes of cultural and historic importance. We believe the state should assist local officials and the public in establishing their own growth policies. We support legislation to include local officials and the public "at the table" when state boards are making decisions that affect that community. We encourage local and county governments to consider the cumulative effects of large housing developments during subdivision approval.

Clean Water

Montana's clean water is a crucial resource for human life, health, and our economy. We support protection, conservation and improvement of the quality and quantity of our ground and surface water. Except for bottled and processed water products, we oppose the sale, transfer, or marketing of Montana's water for use in other states. Persistent drought magnifies the necessity that we be ever vigilant in protecting water quality and quantity. We oppose any privatization of public water systems.

Clean Air

Montana's clean air is a crucial resource for human life, health and our economy as guaranteed by Montana's Constitution. We support the protection and improvement of our air quality.

Solid and Hazardous Waste Disposal and Recycling

Disposal of solid waste presents numerous threats to the environment. We believe that opportunities for true recycling should be available throughout the state for both environmental and economic reasons. We also believe in adequate reclamation of environmentally disturbed areas and disposal of hazardous and toxic waste so as to ensure public health and safety, as well as environmental integrity. We oppose transport and disposal, in Montana, of hazardous and toxic waste generated outside Montana.

Energy

Montana is taking a leading role in the development and the employment of new technologies related to energy efficiency, conservation, wind power, coal gasification, renewable resources, bio fuels, geothermal, energy storage and traditional energy sources. With a can-do spirit, we must utilize our entrepreneurs, workforce, university system and government agencies to produce clean, reliable and affordable energy for Montanans.

The most cost-effective sources of "new" energy are conservation, efficiency and demand-side management. Energy efficiency standards for buildings and appliances, smart metering and other practices that reduce energy consumption and costs for homeowners and businesses are critical. We support transportation system improvements that decrease fuel consumption.

Montana must restore the model for a sound energy utility that was lost to "deregulation." The model includes a properly regulated utility with vertically integrated functions, including its own cost-based generation. In this way we ensure that Montana energy consumers can take advantage of Montana's vast and affordable energy resources.

We support the continuation of viable Universal Services Benefits programs and recognize the importance of low-income assistance, weatherization programs, energy efficiency, conservation, and renewable resources offered under these programs.

The cost of transportation fuels is critically important to consumers in a transportation-dependent, northern-climate state like Montana. Our low and middle-income residents and businesses cannot continue to shoulder the burden of high prices established by the petroleum and natural gas markets. For the sake of Montana's residential, agricultural and business communities, Congress must eliminate manipulation of these markets. We believe energy efficiency, coal gasification and bio-fuel development provide Montanans growing opportunities to reduce reliance on the highly concentrated sectors of the petroleum markets and to develop new Montana businesses, both in agriculture and fuel production.

Climate Change

We recognize the overwhelming consensus of the scientific community that global warming is occurring and accelerating, that it is to a significant degree caused by human activities, and because of the consequences for Montana's economy, environment, culture, and public health, should be effectively and promptly addressed.

Because the problem is global, it can be impacted best by the United States through national solutions. Thus, we support the call from industry and environmental groups alike for the adoption of federal standards for reducing atmospheric levels of CO₂ by, among other things, establishing strategies and protocols concerning capture, transportation, sequestration and liability for disposal of CO₂.

Being a state with immense land resources, Montana can contribute to the solution and also economically benefit state lands and private business through terrestrial (land and plant-based) and geological carbon sequestration. Thus, we support market-based approaches such as that conducted by the Chicago Climate Exchange, as an effective means to decreasing carbon emissions and providing economic opportunities for Montana. This kind of proactive approach for reducing CO₂ will create additional, sustainable, and desirable jobs in Montana and invigorate our state economy.

Environmental Sustainability

Montana has historically suffered from corporate environmental exploitation and degradation. We encourage sustainable use of all resources with the long-term health and benefit of all Montanans in mind. We need to empower local citizens to plan for our future and to discourage the "cut and run" mentality of the past. Continued emphasis must be placed on efforts to curtail adverse environmental impacts of logging, mining, grazing, subdivision, and other development activities.

Forest Practices

Forest products constitute an historical and continuing part of Montana's economy. In order for logging to maintain its importance in our economy, it must be sustainable, and the manufacture of value-added products within our state should be encouraged. Our forest management practices should ensure the ecological health of our forests and also allow for the types of recreation which constitute an increasingly important component of Montana's economy, i.e. hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities.

We understand the critical importance of maintaining a healthy vibrant forest products industry as a tool to effective forest stewardship. We call upon the federal government to coordinate with state and local government forest policy in order to enhance the management of our forests.

Especially in light of insect infestations and disease, the federal government must be active in managing forests, reducing forest fuels, and restoring watersheds and natural forest systems through the use of stewardship logging which ensures the health and integrity of the forest and provides jobs.

Agriculture

We realize that agriculture, including the livestock industry, is an important component of our state's economy. Recognizing not only our own self-interest, but future demands for our products as the world struggles to feed itself, we affirm and encourage the need for sustainable agricultural practices, including those which protect rangelands, riparian areas and wetlands habitats and which inhibit soil erosion, reduce dependency upon hazardous chemicals, maintain and enhance soil fertility and encourage the continued support of family farms.

Extractive Industries

Extractive industries have historically been part of Montana's economy, and we affirm the importance of environmentally responsible extraction of hard rock minerals, coal and coal bed methane, oil and gas. The state and federal government should maintain effective programs to reclaim the environmental impacts of resource extraction. Because of potential impacts to our state's natural resources, we will advocate for policies that make sure all resource extraction is done responsibly with adequate environmental protections and that coal bed methane development does not damage Montana's groundwater, rivers, streams and agricultural land. It is necessary to require sufficient bonding to both reclaim damages and to restore the environment. Extractive industries have a responsibility to protect the health of the environment and the safety of their workers.

Wetlands and Riparian Areas

Montana's wetlands and riparian areas, under the jurisdiction of both state and federal agencies, continue to diminish in both quantity and quality. We support the planning and protection of wetlands and riparian areas as an integral part of land-use planning and protection of water resources and related habitats.

The Environment, Natural Resources and Energy Resolutions

Resolution on Fostering Private Investment in Energy Efficiency

WHEREAS, national potential for rising energy demand risks straining Montana's existing power production facilities; and

WHEREAS, as increasing use of fossil fuels contributes to climate change, threatening Montana's economy, environment, culture, and public health; and

WHEREAS, energy efficiency improvements are an attainable way to decrease energy consumption; and

WHEREAS, decreased energy consumption saves home and small business owners money which can be re-circulated into local economies; and

WHEREAS, while energy efficiency improvements create significant long-term savings, they are often too expensive up-front for many homeowners and businesspeople; and

WHEREAS, energy efficiency improvements create job opportunities for Montanans throughout the state;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports the creation of state or local government revolving loan funds or other public financial instruments to foster private energy efficiency improvements in homes and businesses across the state.

Resolution on Requiring Aquifer Recharge

WHEREAS, water is a limited resource in Montana and is the basis of the state's farming and ranching economy and necessary for other economic development, as well as for wildlife, natural ecosystems, and domestic use; and

WHEREAS, coal bed methane development requires the dewatering of coal seam aquifers, which are often the only reliable source of water for domestic purposes and livestock watering in the Powder River Basin area; and

WHEREAS, groundwater withdrawal from coal bed methane production wells has been shown to cause significant drawdown of the groundwater table in areas that have methane development thus threatening Montana's water resources and putting senior water right holders at risk; and

WHEREAS, if pumped into streams, this water can threaten downstream uses, such as irrigation; and

WHEREAS, aquifer recharge through reinjection is practical and affordable;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Montana Democratic Party supports requiring the coal bed methane industry to recharge as much water as possible into the aquifer from which it was removed.

Resolution on the Importance of the Montana Environmental Policy Act to the Constitutional Guarantee of a Clean and Healthful Environment

WHEREAS, the Montana Constitution guarantees Montanans' rights to a clean and healthful environment; and

WHEREAS, the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) stewards the Montana Constitution's guarantee of a clean and healthful environment as Montana's bedrock environmental law; and

WHEREAS, MEPA is the primary way the public may participate in permitting decisions that impact the Constitutional guarantee of a clean and healthful environment; and

WHEREAS, MEPA requires accountable, informed and balanced decision-making from government;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana State Democratic Party pledges to protect MEPA and the Montana Constitution's guarantee of a clean and healthful environment from being further diminished by legislation or administrative action; and

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana State Democratic Party supports legislation that would restore the opportunity for public comment to 90 days and require adequate review of complex projects with the potential to harm the lifestyles and livelihoods of Montanans relying on government to steward the guarantee of a clean and healthful environment.

General and Local Government

We see government as the means by which people work together to solve mutual problems and accomplish goals. We support processes that facilitate wider citizen participation at all levels of government (local, state, tribal, and federal) and mutual respect between Montanans and their government. Thus, we advocate comprehensive campaign finance reform, strict ethical practices, and open and accessible government and elections. Government should be responsive and accountable to the public.

General and Local Government Plank Appendix

Local Control and Taxation

We encourage local control and support the revision of state laws so that local governments can exercise discretion, flexibility, efficiency and responsiveness to their diverse constituents. The state should not burden local governments with cost shifting and unfunded mandates. We believe in fair and equitable taxation and budget policy that provides adequate funding for services.

Privatization

We support the most cost-efficient and cost-effective provision of services to the public. Efforts to privatize public service must include an honest, open, and fair process which clearly demonstrates that privatization is in the best interest of the public, does not adversely impact the affected public employees, and is subject to regulation.

Infrastructure

We recognize the importance of a strong and modern infrastructure to Montana's future and economic well-being. We support creative planning and cooperative partnerships among local, state, tribal and federal levels of government to finance the building, maintenance and enhancement of all our critical infrastructure systems including transportation, communication technology, water, sewer, energy delivery and economic development. We support creating a public-private partnership to expand and enhance a statewide high speed Internet infrastructure that is both affordable and accessible to all. We support "complete street provisions" that allow for all forms of transportation in local municipalities as determined by local government.

Campaign Finance Reform

We strongly advocate comprehensive campaign finance reform to encourage greater participation by all citizens. All campaign and ballot-initiative contributions and expenditures should be fully disclosed. The option of publicly funding campaigns at local and state levels should be pursued by the legislature.

Quality of Life

Recognizing that quality of life is essential to preserving Montana's communities, we support local government's right to protect and enhance a safe, clean and healthful environment for all Montanans. We encourage cooperative efforts between state and local governments to provide needed services. We support allowing local government to determine appropriate revenue sources to meet local needs such as access to health care, affordable housing, quality education and basic services.

Health Care

We will work to ensure that every Montanan has access to quality and affordable health care. We support Montanans' right to choose their health care provider and the privacy of personal medical information. We will provide healthcare coverage to all Montanans, including children; reduce the cost of prescription drugs; maintain the Insure Montana program to provide substantial tax credits to small businesses that provide health insurance to their employees; implement creative approaches to prevent and treat chronic disease; support community-based health care; and help small businesses and non-profit enterprises come together to purchase health insurance.

Health Care Plank Appendix

We will work to ensure that every Montanan has access to quality and affordable health care. We will protect Montanans' right to choose their health care provider and the privacy of personal medical information. We will provide health care coverage to all Montana children, reduce the cost of prescription drugs, provide substantial tax credits to small businesses that provide health insurance to their employees, and help small businesses and non-profit enterprises come together to purchase health insurance.

We will explore affordable and comprehensive prescription drug benefit opportunities for all Montanans

Health care policies must be designed to recognize and respond to the needs of all Montanans, regardless of age, income or place of residence, especially rural Montanans and Montanans not yet eligible for Medicare.

Health insurance programs should encourage people to take care of their health.

Health insurance programs in Montana should provide coverage parity for mental health services.

Any changes to Medicaid must preserve adequate coverage for low-income Montanans now covered.

Information about options for appropriate health programs and benefits should be provided to Montanans in a simple, understandable way.

We will work to ensure that people insured by private health insurance are not dropped and placed on the Medicaid program.

The Montana Democratic Party supports the Healthy Montana Kids Plan (I-155). The Healthy Montana Kids Plan includes a strategy for effectively enrolling eligible, uninsured children through schools, hospitals, YMCAs, Head Start programs, and other public and private “enrollment partners.”

We support insurance reform that ends insurance company abuses such as rescissions, medical underwriting, preexisting exclusions and volatile premium increases.

We support the WIC program in all Montana counties.

Health Care Resolutions

Gambling Addiction Counseling

WHEREAS some individuals suffer from an addiction to gambling and gambling is currently legal in the state of Montana;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Democratic Party supports funding for the treatment of pathological gambling addiction.

Addition of Preventive Care Services

WHEREAS, preventive health care and education improves the health of our people and reduces exposure to severe diseases; and

WHEREAS, many Montanans are covered by group insurance and have no opportunity to choose among health care plans; and

WHEREAS, preventive care has proven to be cost effective; and

WHEREAS, preventive care is not presently offered in many health insurance plans;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party promotes measures to encourage or require all health insurance plans to offer coverage for preventive health care services.

Retirement Health Insurance Coverage

WHEREAS, many Montanans lose health care coverage upon retirement; and

WHEREAS, this is particularly harmful for people who retire at an early age;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana Democratic Party supports requiring all group plans to offer retirees comparable health coverage at the current group rate.

Mental Health Coverage

WHEREAS, mental illness does respond to appropriate treatment; and

WHEREAS, coverage for mental illness is often inadequate; and

WHEREAS, Montana currently provides partial parity for mental health;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party strongly supports coverage for mental health services and coverage parity for these services.

Tribal Health Care

WHEREAS, the Montana Democratic Party recognizes the unique cultural and socioeconomic needs of American Indians on reservations and in urban settings; and

WHEREAS, there is an overall disparity of health care funding and resources adversely affecting the tribal nations of Montana; and

WHEREAS, many physical and mental diseases are more common among American Indians;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party urges federal and state governments to ensure the equitable and fair delivery of quality, affordable health care to American Indians.

Women's Health Care Decisions

WHEREAS, the number of unwanted pregnancies is best reduced through education, planned parenting, safe sex, abstinence, and other alternatives as decided by a woman and her licensed health care provider; and

WHEREAS, a woman, no matter what her age, should be able to make decisions about all aspects of her health care without loss of privacy and confidentiality;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party opposes laws and government interference with the privacy and rights of a woman in making her own health decisions.

Tobacco

WHEREAS, Montana and forty other states settled suits against the nation's tobacco companies to hold them accountable for the billions of dollars of damage they have caused to public health in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Montana will receive nearly one billion dollars over the next twenty-five years; and

WHEREAS, the proceeds of this recovery must be applied to remedy public health problems and risks created by tobacco; and

WHEREAS, tobacco use jeopardizes funding for public health services and threatens the lives of thousands of Montanans; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports efforts that dedicate all funds received from the proceeds of litigation against the tobacco industry and interest from the tobacco settlement trust fund to fund public health programs, including but not limited to, health care for children, smoking cessation and prevention programs, health-related research and health education programs, CHIP, MCHA, and prevention of tobacco use.

Stem Cell Research

WHEREAS, science shows that embryonic stem cells could hold the key to finding cures for diseases from cancer to multiple sclerosis (MS) to spinal cord injury; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana Democratic Party supports the federal funding of stem cell research.

Rural Health Care

WHEREAS, the proximity of quality rural hospitals, nursing homes and medical providers to small communities saves the lives of many critically ill patients;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports efforts to maintain and improve funding for rural health care.

Health Care Reform

WHEREAS, Montana Democrats worked hard to bring about real reform of our nation's health care system; and

WHEREAS, Montana Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester helped lead the fight to pass health care reform legislation that will reform the insurance market and end insurance company abuses, provide health insurance coverage to 32 million uninsured Americans, bring about accountability and better health outcomes and close the Medicare doughnut hole; and

WHEREAS, thanks to their efforts, health care reform will also reduce the federal deficit, provide tax credits for small businesses and promote an increase in primary care and wellness; and

WHEREAS, the work of health care reform is just beginning;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that as Montana Democrats:

We recognize that the future of our state is tied to the health of our citizens. Our businesses will not succeed without healthy workers. Our state will not grow without healthy kids. Our families will not prosper when health care costs force more and more into bankruptcy. We must make health care reform work; and

We believe that we must seize this opportunity to usher in real change in the health insurance industry and hold insurance companies accountable. That means: We will work to ensure that health care reform works for Montana and keep as much regulation of the health insurance market as possible at the state level. That includes giving the Montana Commissioner of Insurance the authority to take action against insurance companies that unreasonably raise health insurance rates; and

We will push for development of a state-based health insurance exchange to provide coverage options to the 159,000 Montanans without health insurance and the 79,000 Montanans who purchase insurance in the individual market; and

We must ensure that there is transparency in the market and that insurance companies spend at least 80% of premium dollars on delivery of health care and not administrative expenses; and

We support federal and state tax credits for small businesses and programs like Insure Montana, which help Montana businesses and not-for-profit enterprises provide health insurance to their employees, and premium assistance and tax credits that will help individuals afford health insurance; and

We believe in a strong Medicare program for our seniors and support new federal reforms, including those that will make over 28,000 Montana seniors eligible for a \$250 rebate and begin to close the so-called “doughnut hole” and that will improve Medicare by adding free annual wellness and preventative services; and

We recognize that the federal expansion of Medicaid will provide access to health care to tens of thousands of Montanans and their children and we will work hard to find a way to provide this new coverage in challenging economic times, making the most of the opportunities available to Montana; and

We also recognize that a strong and vibrant health care community is critical, not only to our well-being, but to the economic health of our state. Doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, mental health professionals, dental practitioners, physician assistants and others involved in the delivery of health care play a critical role in shaping our future. Montana Democrats understand the important role state fiscal and tax policy plays in our delivery system. We will work to find solutions to provider shortages in rural Montana. We support the provisions of Health Care Reform that provide primary care Medicare doctors with a payment bonus. And we will encourage growth of community health centers and other creative delivery system reforms to ensure that Montanans continue to have access to world class medical care; and

We understand that part of controlling health care costs means that our citizens must lead healthier lives. We applaud efforts to promote wellness, including both those ongoing efforts, the provisions of Health Care Reform that require prevention and wellness benefits and the shift from fee for service to outcome based payment systems; and

While we face many challenges, none is more critical to the personal and economic health of our state. We must make Health Care Reform work for the people of Montana, and as Montana Democrats we will.

Diabetes

WHEREAS, diabetes is a serious, costly and increasingly common chronic disease that affects almost 24 million Americans, and millions more are at risk for the disease; and

WHEREAS, diabetes contributes to almost 234,000 deaths a year and is the fifth leading cause of death by disease in the United States; and

WHEREAS, almost 48,000 or 6.4% of adults in Montana are diagnosed with diabetes in 2006 while in 1994 only 2.5% of adults were diagnosed with diabetes, making diabetes one of the most common yet most costly chronic diseases impacting the state; and

WHEREAS, diabetes causes preventable complications that can be life threatening; and

WHEREAS, diabetes is a leading cause of blindness, kidney failure, leg and foot amputations, pregnancy complications, and death related to flu and pneumonia; and

WHEREAS, the leading cause of death in people with diabetes are heart disease and stroke; and

WHEREAS, minority populations, especially Native Americans, suffer from diabetes at rates much higher than the general population and have the higher rates of complications associated with the disease; and

WHEREAS, geographic regions home to communities of Native Americans of Montana saw staggering increases in the rate of diabetes; and

WHEREAS, though Native Americans only represent 6.8% of the population, about 25% (or 12,000) of all cases of diagnosed diabetes among Montana adults are Native Americans; and

WHEREAS, federal funding provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for state-run diabetes control programs decreased 4.3% in FY 2009 with a greater than 12% reduction in program funding for the Montana program suggests the government focus is not upon the needs of people impacted by diabetes in Montana.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party supports implementing programs and coordinated efforts to reach and motivate people diagnosed with diabetes and their healthcare teams in Montana to obtain and provide appropriate medical care to prevent, diagnose and treat diabetes while reducing the risk of complications associated with the disease. Efforts that allow Montana's Native American communities, tribes and the state to implement efforts to prevent, diagnose and treat diabetes while reducing the burdens associated with the disease for Native Americans living with or at-risk for diabetes should also be implemented. Efforts must also be undertaken to assess the work

currently underway in the state aimed at reaching populations living with diabetes to ensure the efforts are reducing the impact of diabetes complications in Montana. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other federal government entities are called upon to provide Montana with relevant and necessary resources to prevent, detect and treat population impacted by the epidemic of diabetes in Montana.

Care for Elderly Montanans

WHEREAS, by 2015, US Census data indicates one out of four (1 of 4) Montanans will be aged 65 and older as the baby boomer generation matures; and

WHEREAS, at that time, Montana will rank 4th in the nation in percentage of population 65 and older and 3rd in the nation in percentage of its population aged 85 and older; and

WHEREAS, by 2015, there will be more elderly people living in Montana than there are elementary, secondary and post-secondary students, with some approximately 250,000 elderly over age 65, and only 143,000 school-age children, and 40,000 post-secondary students; and

WHEREAS, those elderly residents will increasingly need and demand assistance and services, such as home health care, adult day care, assisted living and nursing home care, as they age and live longer lives; and

WHEREAS, currently annual care costs in Montana for nursing homes average nearly \$60,000, for assisted living almost \$34,000 for part-time adult day care, \$17,500 and for full-time home health care \$45,000 to \$60,000 per year; and

WHEREAS, the majority of those Montana elderly will be considered low to moderate income, having incomes of less than \$25,000 per year; and

WHEREAS, Montana currently grants only a very limited number of Medicaid waivers for any alternative kind of elder care services and facilities, other than nursing homes;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that to better meet the needs of Montana's rapidly growing elderly population, the Montana Democratic Party supports the implementation of legislative and administrative policies and procedures that will substantially increase the flexibility for low and moderate income seniors in need of alternative elder care services and facilities other than nursing homes, and look for ways to help seniors buy into long-term care federal insurance.

Human Rights & Social Services

Every human being has unique worth and must be given a fair and equal opportunity to fulfill his or her potential. We support the right to hold one's personal beliefs without interference from those with different beliefs. We oppose restrictive legislation or governmental intervention into the private decisions of all Montanans. We must ensure all Montanans are free from harassment and discrimination, and are treated equally before the law, regardless of race, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation, language, national origin, physical or mental ability, or marital status. We support cooperation between public, private, non-profit and faith-based organizations in providing policies and services that strengthen all families and communities. Individuals and their families should have access to the basic necessities of life, which include, but are not limited to, health care, education, shelter, adequate nutrition and lives free of violence.

Human Rights and Social Services Plank Appendix

We acknowledge that a democratic society cannot survive without the support of and respect for the diversity of all Montanans.

Rights of Children and Families

We support necessary steps to strengthen all families, regardless of structure. Specifically, we strongly endorse measures that protect the health and safety of Montana's children. We deplore policies that hurt children's welfare or their fundamental right to access basic necessities. These basic needs should be provided for all children regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, creed, religion, national origin, legal status, or physical or mental ability.

We strongly encourage funding domestic violence and child abuse prevention through education, early intervention, more resources for shelters, treatment, including residential treatment, and personnel to work on these programs. We support strong accountability for those found guilty of assault on a partner or family member. We affirm that children usually thrive best in the care of their families, but that in cases of abuse, children's rights to protection must take priority while permanent placement be addressed under established guidelines.

We strongly support communities in creating environments free from fear, violence and harassment.

Rights of Working Montanans and their Dependents

We encourage workplace environments that allow individuals to meet their dependents' needs and responsibilities, including a living wage, flex time, family medical leave and employer-assisted childcare. Recognizing the significant and broad impact the lack of pay equity has on Montana families, we support continued efforts to achieve pay equity. We support the continuation of affirmative action to provide opportunities for all people to pursue meaningful, substantial, and gainful activity. We further support the well being of children by encouraging programs that recognize parenting as valued work.

Rights of Women

We reaffirm our historic support of the Equal Rights Amendment. We further support and respect an individual's right and ability to make personal decisions regarding reproduction and childbirth as constitutionally guaranteed. We oppose restrictive legislation or governmental intervention into these private decisions. We support the right of women to receive health care in a safe environment. We further support the protection of those who provide women's health services. We support funding reproductive and family planning education and STD/AIDS prevention education for men and women. We support programs and policies which seek to change attitudes and behaviors in order to reduce unplanned pregnancies and the transmission of STD/AIDS.

Senior Citizens

We believe that the federal government should continue its historic commitment to senior citizens by supporting Social Security and Medicare programs, railroad and all federal retirement programs, and the Federal Older Americans Act. We strongly oppose any privatization of Social Security.

As the longevity of the population increases, so does the need to maintain or enlarge services for adequate housing and assistance in living at home. Further community-based services should be designed to help citizens maintain independence. We strongly support ombudsman and advocacy services in all facets of senior living experiences and endorse measures that protect the health and safety of Montana's seniors.

Dignity of Life and Death

We affirm the dignity of life and an individual's right to make end-of-life decisions.

Persons with Special Needs

We support the right of all persons with special needs to be served in the least restrictive environment appropriate. Therefore, we continue our commitment to expansion of community-based programs, including early intervention as well as services for unserved and under-served Montanans. We further advocate increased awareness of the need to provide full accessibility in workplaces, parking, theaters, courthouses, schools and other public facilities.

We support the philosophy of and full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), to allow everyone to lead a productive, dignified life. We further encourage public and private employers to hire people with special needs and to provide appropriate workplace accommodations.

Social Services

We support federal, state, local, tribal, and private efforts to ensure all Montanans are guaranteed their inalienable right to essential human dignity and life's basic necessities. Our society must share the responsibility of ensuring that individuals unable to provide for themselves are afforded the means to meet their needs and to assure their long-term self- sufficiency.

Housing

Housing should be available to all regardless of race, creed, age, gender, marital or legal status, family structure, sexual orientation or physical/mental ability.

We support safe, affordable and accessible housing for all Montanans, particularly programs for low-income people including low-rent housing and availability of low-interest loans to assist in purchasing homes.

We recognize the important role of renters in funding every level of government and their right to participate in policy discussions.

We support the efforts of municipalities to protect the health and safety of all residents within their communities.

The Homeless

We support efforts to reach out to help homeless men, women, and children find and secure decent, safe, and accessible shelter, to obtain social services, and to assist them in finding means of supporting themselves when they are able. We support emergency, transitional and long-term programs.

Hunger

We believe nutritional programs to feed the hungry should be strengthened and the causes of hunger addressed. Because the number of homeless and hungry is rising and privately funded volunteer food programs are less able to meet demands, we believe nutritional programs to feed the hungry should be strengthened and the causes of hunger addressed.

Civil Unions

We support legal protection for same-sex civil unions. We believe that parties to a civil union should have the same legal benefits, protections and responsibilities granted to other individuals united by civil contract under Montana laws.

Human Rights & Social Services Resolutions

Hate Crimes

WHEREAS, violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression is real, exists in Montana, and is a common occurrence; and

WHEREAS, current law does not offer sufficient redress for victims of crimes committed against individuals due to their sexual orientations, gender identity and expression;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that sexual orientation, gender identity and expression should be included in the Montana Hate Crimes Act.

Predatory Lending Practices

WHEREAS, credit is a vital part of the modern economy for businesses; and

WHEREAS, the people of Montana depend on access to loans and credit for all manner of purchases;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democrats oppose lending practices that prey upon persons or institutions of disadvantaged economic means; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we encourage responsible lending practices with reasonable rates of return, conducted fairly and in good faith. This includes

building community initiatives to educate consumers and encouraging financial institutions to create lending programs that meet these community needs.

Human Trafficking must be Stopped Resolution

WHEREAS, human rights groups estimate that millions are enslaved in forced or bonded labor, child labor, sexual servitude and involuntary servitude at any given time; and

WHEREAS, to stop the human trafficking trade, educating societies about this inhumane treatment is the first step; and

WHEREAS, this trade industry is degrading to the victims and most often violent towards defenseless children and women;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, Montana Democrats advocate for support and treatment for victims of human trafficking and demand that predators be brought to justice.

Hunting, Fishing & Outdoor Recreation Activities

We support the right to keep and bear arms as defined in both the Montana and U.S. Constitutions. We recognize that hunting, fishing, and other outdoor recreation activities are essential components of the Montana culture. We also believe that the opportunity for Montana families to enjoy nature's bounty is an important part of our state's heritage. We support the public ownership of the fish, wildlife, streams and rivers of our state, and believe that the state holds these resources in trust for the beneficial use of its citizens. As such, we believe that Montanans are entitled to reasonable access to these public resources, consistent with private property rights, and that no commercial entity should be allowed to hold a vested interest in them.

Hunting, Fishing and Outdoor Recreation Activities Plank Appendix

We affirm Montanans' right to participate in fair chase hunting, fishing, and outdoor recreation on our public lands as part of our state's heritage. We believe that public access to public lands is an important part of our existing traditions.

Access to public lands and waters should be maintained and increased, and public lands should not be diminished in size or recreational quality. We oppose any net loss of publically owned lands.

We will defend, without compromise, Montana's Stream Access Law, including the public's right to access streams at public bridges.

We recognize and appreciate the contribution of private landowners to plentiful and healthy fish and wildlife populations, including the public access they provide. We support appropriate incentives to compensate landowners for the impact of hunting and fishing as well as the maintenance of wildlife habitat on private land.

We reject any program that would allow the private sale of wildlife or any tags or permits intended to legally authorize the harvest of wildlife by any source other than the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

We are committed to stemming and reversing the increasing trend toward privatization and commercialization of public fish and wildlife resources in this state. We are in favor of using existing authority to elevate public interest over commercial interest in hunting, fishing and other outdoor activities in the state.

We believe that commissions and boards that are charged with influencing public resource policy shall be composed of diverse stakeholders and be required to represent the diverse interests and values of Montana's citizenry.

We recognize that chronic wasting disease, whirling disease and other wildlife afflictions are potentially devastating to Montana's fish and wildlife populations. The same is true of habitat degradation brought about by the spread of noxious weeds and invasive aquatic species. Therefore, we advocate the development of aggressive research, prevention and control programs on private and public land.

We support responsible travel management planning that insures resource and private property protection while allowing reasonable public access and minimizing conflicts.

We believe that public hunting continues to be the most appropriate tool to successfully manage wildlife populations. Public hunting has been a valuable part of the most successful wildlife management system ever devised. Rejection of this method often leads to problems of overpopulation and unbalanced age and gender segments within big game herds.

Jobs & Economic Growth

We support the development of opportunities that assist Montana's profit and nonprofit businesses, attract quality employers, and address the needs of responsible businesses, both large and small. Our policies must foster a healthy and prosperous business climate that respects and protects Montana. We are committed to increasing both the number and quality of jobs in Montana, jobs that provide good salaries, benefits and a healthy, safe workplace. Democrats support efforts to strengthen and diversify the economy by creating growth in all sectors throughout the entire state, including rural Montana and Indian Country. We believe that creating quality jobs and preserving our quality way of life can be accomplished together.

Jobs and Economic Growth Plank Appendix

We support economic growth that fosters an equitable and positive business/worker atmosphere, promoting good-paying jobs with benefits that allow all Montana workers to share in prosperity while respecting traditional Montana values.

Unemployment remains a challenge. In order to meet the employment needs of Montanans, we must develop opportunities in the new economy. We can create jobs while preserving our priceless natural heritage.

Solid communities and strong infrastructure are the foundation for economic growth. Montana must provide tools with funding that foster business growth and sustainability at all levels – local, regional, and statewide. These should include access to affordable capital for small businesses, available and affordable transportation including full-service air, rail and bus travel, workforce development, and high-speed telecommunications.

We recognize that effective business development requires safe, strong, and effective communities. We are committed to providing Montana communities with universally accessible medical services, quality public education, a clean environment, clean water and sanitary services. Effective communities require proper growth planning in order to provide decent attainable housing and transportation.

We encourage sustainable economic activity that responsibly utilizes Montana's resources and maximizes the public benefit of dollars spent in our state. This includes producing products in Montana from Montana resources and supporting Montana-owned businesses. Procurement of goods and services by Montana

government should promote expansion of markets for Montana businesses. We support promoting Montana through tourism and Montana-made products and services in the global marketplace.

We advocate the development of opportunities that assist existing businesses and attract quality employers. Examples include employer training in personnel areas, workforce development and training, matching money for research in our university system, local access to telecommunications technologies, continued support for economic development councils, and government incentives for job creation.

Democrats recognize the importance of existing businesses in Montana. Small business provides most of the jobs in Montana. We want to strengthen our commitment to growing small business in rural communities. We recognize their unique circumstances and support policies that encourage efforts to start small businesses, equal and fair access to capital, timely information and services, simplified governmental procedures, and access to technical assistance.

We believe government should be of service to business growth. We support emphasis on the importance of workforce training and education in the success of economic development; an affordable workers' compensation system that protects the interests of employers and employees; simplified licensing procedures; and incentives to provide adequate benefits to workers, including health care and retirement benefits.

We believe that for Montanans to prosper in a highly competitive international economy, we must promote "fair trade" agreements that enhance and improve the export value of Montana products, thus protecting Montana jobs.

JOBS AND ECONOMIC GROWTH RESOLUTIONS

Passenger Rail

WHEREAS, Montana's roadways are growing congested, we face a dwindling supply of oil, and trains are the most energy-efficient way to move people; and

WHEREAS, the cost of owning and driving a car is growing more expensive fast enough that working Montanans need transportation alternatives; and

WHEREAS, commercial airline service to most communities in Montana is inadequate and at risk of further reductions and/or ending altogether; and

WHEREAS, as a result of global climate change, we need to take every possible step to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, AMTRAK was created in 1971 from what remained of the private passenger railroads; and

WHEREAS, the AMTRAK Empire Builder is the number one long-distance passenger train in the United States, with over ninety percent on-time performance, and is greatly needed for the citizens of Montana's Hi-Line who have limited public transportation options; and

WHEREAS, the North Coast Hiawatha is a former AMTRAK route that ceased operation through southern Montana in 1979; and

WHEREAS, transportation to and from the major population centers of southern Montana would be greatly enhanced by AMTRAK rail passenger service; and

WHEREAS, the Congress and AMTRAK Corporation have opened the door to new AMTRAK routes and the State of Montana is studying the opportunity for a southern rail passenger route;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Montana Democratic Party supports the continuation of AMTRAK passenger rail service along the Hi-Line and the reintroduction of AMTRAK passenger rail service to southern Montana.

Resolution Applauding the Efforts of Montana Democratic Elected Officials in Economic Development

WHEREAS, the Montana Democratic Party has assisted in the election of Democratic officials who have been dedicated to economic development and job creation across the entire state; and

WHEREAS, those same Democratic elected officials have committed themselves to achieving better, high-quality jobs in a manner that does not reduce the quality of life in Montana;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Montana Democratic Party applauds the efforts of Governor Brian Schweitzer; U. S. Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester; other statewide and regionally elected Democratic officials and Democratic members of the state legislature for their efforts in support of quality economic development across the entire state of Montana, which has lead to a strengthened economy in many areas and improved opportunities for economic growth throughout the entire state.

Judiciary

We support a free and independent judiciary. We support the right of all people to assert their rights in the courts. The proper role of government is to support the private choices of its citizens, protect citizens from hate crimes and violence in any form, and to provide safe communities while emphasizing personal and corporate responsibility and accountability. Early intervention, prevention, and treatment at the local level are critical to success in curbing crime.

Judiciary Plank Appendix

Importance of a Free and Independent Judiciary

We support a free and independent judiciary. The judiciary should not be influenced by or concerned with any prejudice, political or religious dogma, or personal agenda.

Prejudice

The proper role of government is to support the private choices of all citizens, and to protect all citizens from hate crimes and violence in any form.

Safe Communities

All people have the right to feel safe and secure and should be assured that criminal acts will be dealt with swiftly and fairly. The criminal justice system and all Montanans should emphasize personal responsibility and accountability. Montana's criminal justice system should require victim and community restitution by the offender.

Criminal Justice

The criminal justice system should focus on early intervention, prevention, and rehabilitation. We support alternatives to incarceration for non-dangerous offenders including community-based corrections. We support fair and just incarceration that is commensurate with the crime. Prisoners and correction dollars should remain in Montana.

Youth Crime

All Montanans must assume responsibility for the state's youth by valuing children

and families. Early intervention, prevention, treatment and consistent sanctions are critical to success in curbing youth crime through a comprehensive approach, involving cooperation among community agencies and families.

Right to Keep and Bear Arms

We support the right to keep and bear arms. We support increased efforts to keep guns out of the hands of unsupervised children and affirm the value of gun safety and hunter education programs.

Crime Prevention

We support crime prevention through government and community efforts to fight domestic violence, youth violence, child abuse and neglect, and substance abuse.

Corporate Responsibility

Corporations, like persons, need to be responsible and accountable for their actions to the full extent of the law.

Access to Justice through the Courts

We support the right of all people to assert their rights under our state and federal constitutions and statutes in the courts, including expanding resources to assist self-represented litigants and ensuring equal access to justice regardless of income.

Consumer Protection

We support the protection of all Montanans against financial scams and fraudulent internet and telemarketing practices by providing adequate resources to law enforcement professionals, preservation of access to our state courts and renewed insistence on corporate accountability.

JUDICIARY RESOLUTIONS

Resolution on Public Funding of Judicial Races

WHEREAS, in order for the rule of law to continue in our state and nation, we need a free and independent judiciary; and

WHEREAS, history has shown us that the requirement of raising funds for political campaigns, and the sources of those funds, may influence the judgment and actions of some political candidates; and

WHEREAS, it is vital that our judiciary be free from any influence other than the rule of law;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana Democratic Party supports public funding of judicial races at all levels of government.

Resolution on *Citizens United vs. FEC*

WHEREAS, the *Citizens United* Supreme Court opinion overturned years of hard-fought campaign finance law, and made corporate interests more powerful; and

WHEREAS, corporation can now spend unlimited amounts of money to influence the outcome of elections;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana Democratic Party strongly supports reform to ensure that citizens' voices are not drowned out by special interests and highly financed corporate interests. These reforms should also ensure that foreign corporations and foreign nationals are restricted from spending money to influence American elections.

Resolution on the Vigorous Prosecution of Investment Scams and Embezzlement

WHEREAS, business and investment are necessary to a healthy economy; and

WHEREAS, crimes such as investment scams, embezzlement and theft discourage, harm and even ruin investors and businesses; and

WHEREAS, labeling such crimes as "white collar" crimes diminishes the serious harm of such crimes to individuals and businesses and thereby the economy; and

WHEREAS, this minimizing of the harms of scams has a detrimental effect on attracting and keeping investment and business; and

WHEREAS, a healthy economy benefits the citizens of the state;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we support introducing legislation or amending of existing law to ensure criminal prosecution and stringent punishment of investment scams, embezzlement and anyone who professionally preys on individuals, businesses, institutions, or the elderly for financial gain by way of deceit.

Labor

Stable jobs with livable wages are the cornerstone of family values. The vast majority of Montanans make their living as wage earners, relying on fair compensation for their labor in order to sustain and build their communities, raise their families, and educate their children. All workers deserve a safe and healthy workplace, just compensation for job-related injury, and unemployment benefits when they suffer loss of their job. We support the right of workers to organize, bargain collectively and strike, if necessary, without threat of permanent replacement. We oppose so-called "right-to-work" and any legislation or initiatives that would skew the political balance of power or restrict the use of union dues for political or legislative activities.

Labor Plank Appendix

We recognize and celebrate the basic honor and dignity of work. We recognize that the vast majority of Montana men and women make their living as wage earners, relying on fair compensation for their labor in order to raise their families, educate their children, and sustain and build communities. We strive to represent working families by standing on these basic principles.

Democracy in the Workplace

We recognize that free collective bargaining is the primary and often only avenue for workers to achieve fair wages, safe and healthful working conditions, and protection against arbitrary and unfair treatment in the workplace. We support democracy in the workplace as well as in the political arena, and strongly defend the right of workers to form and join independent unions for the purpose of bargaining collectively. We oppose attempts to restrict collective bargaining through open shop laws (falsely labeled "right-to-work") and we support labor law reforms that will increase the ability of workers to form and join unions without employer interference.

We regard the relationship between employee and employer as a contract between equals. We believe that the right to withhold one's labor, the right to strike, in the resolution of a labor/management dispute is a basic human right and we therefore oppose the use of "permanent replacements" to undermine that right.

We believe that public employees should enjoy the same rights and deserve the same respect and protections afforded private sector workers and we oppose any weakening of those rights and protections.

Equality in the workplace

We support the basic right of all people to have equal access to meaningful employment so that they and their families may live with dignity.

We support nondiscriminatory practices in hiring, promotions, working conditions, and compensation, regardless of any distinction that has no bearing on a worker's ability to fulfill job duties.

We support equal pay for equal work and commensurate pay for work of comparable worth.

Family and Work

We recognize that stable jobs with fair wages are the cornerstone of family values.

We believe that no worker should have to choose between keeping a job and fulfilling family responsibilities. We believe that, through such protections as family and medical leave, as well as employer-assisted child and elder care programs, the workplace can and should be structured to allow workers to meet their families' needs.

We believe that children deserve to spend their childhood learning, playing and growing rather than working to support themselves and their families. We therefore support strong prohibitions against child labor and strong protections for young adult workers with appropriate employment.

We believe that retired workers deserve to live in dignity and with the respect earned by a lifetime of hard work and contributions to their families and communities. We therefore support strong protections for Social Security, pensions, and Medicare. We believe that public and private retirement funds are the property of employees and should be protected as such. We support legislation to ensure the establishment and protection of defined benefit plans for both public and private portable pension systems that allow workers to move pension coverage between places of employment. We believe in equal taxation of retirees' benefits.

Full and Meaningful Employment

We believe that no worker willing and able to engage in full-time work should be forced to raise his or her family in poverty due to unemployment, underemployment, or inadequate compensation for employment.

We strongly support the creation of meaningful jobs by responsible businesses that provide livable wages and benefits. We strongly oppose the practice of hiring part-time or leased employees in order to avoid or reduce paying fringe benefits, including health insurance and retirement benefits.

We believe that any building project supported with taxpayers dollars should require that workers be paid the prevailing wage rate for their work, and that any public funds in the form of tax breaks, tax deferments, loans or grants used for economic development be tied to the creation of jobs which pay livable wages and provide adequate benefits.

We believe Montanans should get the best value for their tax dollars on public construction works. We support best value bidding and project labor agreements.

We oppose the use of prison labor to replace workers on jobs normally performed by public or private sector workers. We support skill-training programs that enable prisoners to obtain employment upon release.

We believe that continuing education increases the ability of both workers and businesses to compete in a changing marketplace. We support quality education, training and skills upgrading programs for all Montana workers.

Basic Workplace Standards

We believe that workers, employers and government, together, can achieve safe, productive, healthy workplaces, improve the quality of our shared environment and build communities that can sustain and educate Montana families.

We support increases in the minimum wage indexed annually to increases in the cost of living to offer some minimal protection to those workers at the lowest end of the economic scale.

We believe that no worker should be forced to risk their health or their life in order to earn a living. We affirm that a safe and healthful work environment is a basic right of all workers and believe that government should promote, protect and enforce workplace health and safety standards.

We believe that worker's compensation must sustain the worker and his or her dependents in time of injury and/or occupational illness.

We believe that unemployment insurance must be available to all workers and must sustain the worker and his or her dependents in time of job loss due to seasonal employment, dislocation or layoff. We also believe that workers should

receive unemployment insurance during a labor dispute when the employer continues to operate during the strike or lockout.

We believe in efficient and effective government and believe that efficient and effective government is not achieved by privatization of public services. We are opposed to privatization.

Trade

We support fair trade; however, we vehemently oppose normalization of permanent relations with all countries who engage in religious persecution, child labor abuses, forced prison labor, environmental degradation, or forcibly oppose the rights of workers to form unions. We think Congress should have a greater say in trade agreements and should have the ability to amend trade agreements.

Labor Plank Resolutions

In Support of Collective Bargaining in Reclamation/Restoration Projects

WHEREAS, the Montana State Constitution guarantees a clean and healthy environment; and

WHEREAS, a healthy social and cultural environment includes good-paying jobs with health insurance, retirement benefits and working conditions that allow workers to live and work in dignity; and

WHEREAS, restoration and reclamation are producing and can continue to produce many jobs, along with a healthier natural environment; and

WHEREAS, the State of Montana is committed to both a healthy environment and good-paying jobs, as demonstrated at the Governor's Reclamation/Restoration Forum;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party is committed to protecting Montana's natural environment, along with the economic and social well-being of its residents;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party is committed to reclamation and restoration efforts where work is performed under collective bargaining agreements, with sustainable union jobs, defined benefits, and workforce development through apprenticeship programs.

Job Training Programs in Emerging Economies

WHEREAS, the State of Montana has vested interest in developing a competent and diverse workgroup; and

WHEREAS, defining a strong workforce for Montana in the 21st century must include programs to train people for the emerging restoration economy, and the transition of workers to fill emerging trades; and

WHEREAS, Montana does and must have an education system that leads the way in training workers for a changing economy; and

WHEREAS, currently Montana's unions provide skilled training and apprenticeship programs that have made Montana workers the envy of surrounding states; and

WHEREAS, we are now involved in a worldwide economy that demands that we all roll up our sleeves and meet the new demands on our workers and our resources;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Montana Democratic Party urges the State of Montana and Montana labor unions to cooperate in developing programs to train and prepare the workers of Montana for tomorrow's jobs

Support for Rail Transportation Study

WHEREAS, fuel prices have increased with no end in sight due to foreign oil increase costs; and

WHEREAS, Montana's rural/urban travel distances have become costly for individuals and small businesses; and

WHEREAS, rail passenger train services across Montana's southern east/west rail routes would alleviate travel and express costs;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Montana Democratic Party supports Senator Jon Tester's amendment to the Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007 (S294), requiring AMTRAK to perform a study to reinstate the former North Coast/Hiawatha passenger train, to operate with direct connection with the Empire Builder at Fargo, North Dakota and Spokane, Washington; and

THEREFORE, BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED the study should consider the rail routes traversing BNSF track from Fargo, North Dakota to Billings, Montana, Montana Rail Link (MRL) to Logan Montana via BNSF – Butte- Garrison MRL to Spokane, Washington. The Logan – Butte – Garrison route makes up running time, arising from lost time made by Coast/Hiawatha operated in 1979.

Support for Collective Bargaining

WHEREAS, national and local organizations are seeking to weaken a worker's constitutional right to collectively bargain with his/her employer by pushing so-called "right-to-work" laws; and

WHEREAS, the National Right to Work Committee has invested significant money in our state targeting pro-worker legislators; and

WHEREAS, the State of Montana—with full support of the Montana Democratic Party— has always supported collective bargaining; and

WHEREAS, recently the Montana Republican Party adopted language in their Platform hostile to Montana worker's right to collectively bargain with his/her employer;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Montana Democratic Party unequivocally reaffirms our strong support and commitment to a worker's right to collectively bargain with his/her employer and our opposition to so-called (but falsely labeled) "right to work" laws.

A Resolution of the Montana Democratic Party urging elected officials to address the egregious practice of worker misclassification

WHEREAS, worker misclassification is a deceptive effort by bad-acting employers to purposely identify workers as independent contractors to avoid paying employee-related expenses such as Unemployment Insurance and Worker's Compensation; and

WHEREAS, misclassified workers are robbed of basic workplace protections under federal and state law which have protected employees for more than a century, including the National Labor Relations Act, the Occupational Safety and Health Act and even the Americans with Disabilities Act; and

WHEREAS, misclassified workers are often denied healthcare benefits and retirement benefits from their bad-acting employers; and

WHEREAS, bad-acting employers save nearly 30% on worker-related expenses due to misclassification, forcing employers who play by the rules to cover unnecessary added expenses; and

WHEREAS, federal and state governments lose billions of dollars annually due to this egregious practice; and the federal government loses nearly \$4.7 billion

annually while fifteen states which compiled dollar amounts fixed to worker misclassification lose more than \$3.2 billion collectively each year; and

WHEREAS, statistics suggest this practice is increasing in frequency, forcing federal and state governments to take unprecedented steps to crack down on bad-acting employers.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MONTANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY THAT:

Worker misclassification fundamentally challenges much-needed protections for workers and compromising state government.

The federal and Montana state governments should take all necessary steps to eliminate this egregious practice under wage-and-hour, fair labor standards, worker's compensation, and unemployment insurance laws.

All efforts will consider every industry in which worker misclassification exists.

The Montana Democratic Party supports the continued protection of Montana's independent contractors enforcement program.

A Resolution thanking Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester

WHEREAS, in the past two years, American retirement funds have been depleted as we have struggled through the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression; and

WHEREAS, people who have worked their entire lives making regular contributions to their pension plans now face an uncertain future as their retirement funds fluctuate with an unsteady market; and

WHEREAS, the harmful effects of the recession have underscored the urgent need to work with organized labor to develop policy that prioritizes the needs of working families at each stage of their lives, from entry into the workforce to well-earned retirement; and

WHEREAS, multi-employer pension plans have worked for our grandparents and parents, and thanks to the continued support of our Congressional delegation, they will work well for our children and grandchildren as well;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, on behalf of working families across Montana, we the delegates of the Montana Democratic Party would like to express our deepest gratitude and thanks to Sen. Max Baucus and Sen. Jon Tester for their

support of HB 4213, ensuring and protecting the pensions of thousands of working and retired union members.

Peace & Foreign Policy

Montana Democrats gratefully remember Senator Mike Mansfield's quiet insistence that America should treat all nations and peoples with the same dignity and respect that we expect of one another. We support democratic policies and actions that will lead to global stability and promote human equality and civil rights for all peoples of the world. We encourage the use of diplomacy as a means to improve communication and peace efforts among all nations. We seek to empower people and nations with positive efforts to improve people's lives, including foreign aid that meets basic human needs.

Peace and Foreign Policy Plank Appendix

We recognize that Montana's people, land, and economy are interconnected with the world as a whole. We therefore support fair trade practices and the promotion of Montana products and services in the global marketplace. We support policies that promote human and civil rights, including the right to political and economic self-determination, for all peoples of the world, and we encourage debt forgiveness for impoverished nations.

We support democratic policies and actions that will lead to global stability and nuclear, chemical, and biological disarmament.

We recognize the importance of seeking multilateral solutions to global problems.

We support foreign aid that meets basic human needs rather than the supplying of military equipment.

We affirm the need to reduce the risk of war; abide by international treaties to which the United States is a signatory, especially the Geneva Conventions; combat terrorism; and promote peace while continually re-assessing our global military policy.

We support environmental and energy policies which protect and encourage environmental health as a foundation for peace and stability in the world.

Public Education & Cultural Enrichment

We believe that public education is the foundation of democracy. We recognize and defend the Montana Constitution's guarantee of quality and equity of educational opportunities for all students. We affirm an adequately funded educational system promotes a higher quality of life for children, families, and communities and fosters employment opportunities. We are committed to keeping neighborhood and community schools under local control. We insist that local school districts and local public libraries should be guaranteed the resources necessary to promote accountable academic achievement and access to information. Recognizing that education is key to improving quality of life and economic growth, we support all of our Montana public education environments: early childhood, K-12, Adult Basic and Literacy Education-GED, and post-secondary; vocational and technical education, community colleges, tribal colleges and the university system. The state must provide adequate and equitable funding to assure that post-secondary education is affordable to all Montanans.

We support programs to develop and exhibit artistic talent, preserve and interpret historic sites, and provide cultural and educational opportunities, including libraries and museums, for all Montana citizens.

We recognize the importance of preserving and promoting Montana's cultural and historical heritage, including Indian Education for All (Article X, Section 1, Subsection 2 of the Montana Constitution).

Public Education and Cultural Enrichment Plank Appendix

We as Montana Democrats believe:

Montana's Cultural and Historical Heritage

- In freedom of expression consistent with the First Amendment.
- Government has a role in partnership with schools and communities in making cultural activities accessible and available to all Montana citizens.
- Libraries and museums are an integral and valuable educational cultural resource.
- Arts education is an essential component of public education.
- Respect and appreciation of diverse cultures must be encouraged in public education.
- In promoting opportunities for visual and performing artists.

- In adequately funding Indian Education for All.

General Philosophy of Public Education

- The goal of education is to create individual fulfillment and to nurture democratic, productive, and responsible citizenry.
- Our educational system is responsible for preparing students for each level of their educational and vocational achievement.
- Our investment in our citizens and their education is central to Montana's and the Nation's economic future.
- In 21st Century learning, such as distance and online education, in order to advance our workforce and opportunities for all Montanans.

Early Childhood Education

- Children are Montana's future.
- Head Start and other early childhood programs are a vital component of our children's educational environment.

K-12 Education

- Public education promotes lifelong learning skills that increase employment opportunities.
- A strong educational system depends on a respectful partnership among students, educators, parents and communities.
- A strong public educational system is essential for economic development.

High Standards

- Quality education is based on high academic standards.
- Our children should learn the skills to become responsible citizens and leaders in the local and broader community.
- In expanding opportunities for ongoing educator professional development and mentorship programs.
- Access to emerging technology is fundamental to quality education.
- Arts education is fundamental to quality education.
- Schools must be academically accountable.
- In order to recruit and retain quality professional educators for Head Start through higher education, Montana's public schools must provide nationally competitive salaries and benefits.

Adult Education and Literacy

- In assuring that Americans are the best-skilled, best-trained workers in the world.
- Expanding adult basic education and literacy programs will afford workforce members the opportunity to improve their reading, writing, math, critical thinking, and/or English language skills so that they can 1) upgrade those skills to support twenty-first century jobs, and 2) qualify for workforce development and training opportunities available at community colleges and other institutions, and 3) be their children's first teachers, and 4) participate fully in civic life.
- In supporting high quality online learning so that Americans everywhere can learn from experts anywhere, at any time, and in any place.
- Opportunities for lifelong learning will also keep America competitive in a global economy, will help to break the cycle of illiteracy, and enrich democracy.

Community Responsibility

- Education of our youth is the responsibility of the all Montanans.
- Control of our schools should remain community-based.
- All children deserve to be educated in a safe environment free of violence and intimidation.

Fiscal Priorities

- The best use of public funds is public education.
- All Montanans must be guaranteed a publicly supported, quality education.
- The State of Montana must not shift the responsibility of funding public education to local taxpayers. The state is responsible for fully funding a quality education.
- Schools must be fiscally accountable to their community.
- Every school should receive a basic funding entitlement.

Post-Secondary Education

- We support sufficient funding for quality higher education including the university system, community colleges, vocational, technical, and adult education.
- All Montanans must have affordable access to quality post-secondary education that addresses their needs and goals as lifelong learners.
- Montana must reduce its reliance on increasing student tuition for higher education funding.
- Post-secondary programs should be flexible enough to meet the realities of our changing economy, advancements in technology and the needs of the state
- Post-secondary education creates economic development and advances the quality of life for Montanans.
- We support funding for federal grants, loans, scholarships and other financial aid for students.
- We urge the Montana Board of Regents to redress faculty salary compression and inversion.

Public Education and Cultural Enrichment Resolutions

Funding of Mandates

WHEREAS, Montana has often funded educational requirements established by the United States Congress,

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the United States Congress fully fund all of its mandates such as ESEA and IDEA.

Opposition to NCLB

WHEREAS, the last Congressional reauthorization of ESEA, misnamed No Child Left Behind, produced many intended and unintended bad outcomes in the Montana public schools,

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Montana Democratic Party urges Montana's Congressional delegation to support a reauthorized ESEA that does not punish or endanger Montana's public school students, teachers and communities, but instead honors and respects Montana's historic and cultural commitment to state and local school district control and accountability for quality public education.

Opposition to Public School Privatization

WHEREAS, K-12 public education is the foundation of our democracy and,

WHEREAS, diversion of public funding to private sectarian education violates the separation of church and state and is prohibited by the Montana State Constitution, and

WHEREAS, diversion of public funding to private, non-sectarian education unwisely diverts precious resources from public investment in our public schools,

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Montana Democratic Party opposes any public funding of private, sectarian and non-sectarian education through pay vouchers, tax credits or any other private school funding plan.

Accessible Education

WHEREAS, in Montana, the median family dedicates a third of its annual income to just one year of college, after students receive financial aid,

WHEREAS, the average in-state Montana student graduates with over \$20,000 in student loans,

WHEREAS, the amount of loans students are required to take out has doubled in the past decade,

WHEREAS, the proportion which the state government has committed to education has been drastically reduced, shifting the burden onto the students,

WHEREAS, Brian Schweitzer and the Montana legislature temporarily froze collegiate tuition in the 2007 legislative session, emphasizing the need for a commitment to college affordability, and

WHEREAS, Access to Post-Secondary Education for all Montana citizens should be a right, not a privilege;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we stand resolved to make post-secondary education accessible to all serious students, regardless of income.

- Montana must reduce its reliance on increasing student tuition for higher education funding, and commit to achieving a 50/50 student-state funding partnership with the overall goal of restoring a historic 2/3 cost share.
- We oppose further cuts to federal grants, loans, scholarships and other essential financial aid. We are committed to keeping interest rates on student loans low by preserving the 3.4% cap.
- We unequivocally support the periodic passage and renewal of the six mill levy.

Taxation

We seek a fair, just, and equitable tax system that reflects and enhances our changing economy and maintains fiscal responsibility while supporting equality of opportunity for our citizens.

Taxation Plank Appendix

We adhere to the principle of fiscal responsibility, which means being accountable for the wise use of revenue, and identifying and disclosing publicly both how new programs, when proposed, will be funded, as well as, when tax cuts are proposed, what such cuts will cost the public in the form of cuts in existing programs and services and what shifts in taxation will occur.

Resolution regarding the Coal Tax Trust Fund

WHEREAS many attempts have been made in the past to bust the Constitutional Coal Tax Trust Fund,

WHEREAS budget shortfalls may once again raise questions of raiding this Coal Tax Trust Fund,

AND WHEREAS Democrats have always held firm in their opposition to busting this trust,

NOW THEREFORE the Montana Democratic Party reaffirms its strong support for the Constitutional Coal Tax Trust and opposes any attempt to bust the Trust or lower the tax.

Veterans' Needs

One in six Montanans age 18 and older is a veteran, a per capita number second only to Alaska. Montana Democrats recognize and commend the service and sacrifice of all veterans, active duty personnel and their families. We challenge our elected leaders to ensure our veterans and active duty personnel and their families are able to access and receive all benefits promised them upon their entry into service.

Veterans' Needs Plank Appendix

We recognize that Montana has a proud tradition of service to our country in time of war and national emergencies. We are proud of our Montanans in uniform and grateful for their willingness to serve our state and nation. We are committed to ensuring their service and sacrifice is never forgotten.

Montana's veteran population, old and young, are scattered across our very rural state, some a thousand-mile round trip from our only full service U.S. Veteran's Administration Hospital. We support efforts to ensure local and/or regional services are made available for all Montana veterans.

We ask our elected leaders to provide adequate funding and resources to ensure delivery of a wide array of services for our veterans and their families, including but not limited to the following: medical and mental health services, disability compensation, education, employment, housing, and small business assistance. We urge services be especially targeted to suicide prevention and the needs of our homeless vets.

Montana National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, like their colleagues across the U.S., have been deployed for federal wartime duty in ever increasing numbers. These Soldiers and Airmen have served heroically and professionally and we commend and support the Montana National Guard's effort to ensure those members have access to the services that will ensure their healthy and successful readjustment when returning to their families, communities and workplaces. We urge our leaders to recognize that these issues are dynamic and ongoing.

We thank and commend Montana's state veteran service officers, veteran service organizations and other volunteer organizations for the essential work they do every day on behalf of Montana's veterans.