

2006 Platform

I. Preamble

The Michigan Democratic Party believes that government must be open, honest, responsive and accountable to the people it serves. All citizens should have the freedom and the opportunity to rise as high as their talents and initiative will allow. Our Platform expresses our dedication to the belief that those who work hard should be assured the opportunity to achieve greater security. This Platform is a promise to the people of Michigan based on our tradition and our commitment to a better future for the people of our State and Nation.

As Michigan enters the 21st Century we face a time of new opportunities and challenges. This moment is clearly one of possibility, not an absolute guarantee. Under the Bush Administration's economic and trade policies, our state's economy has faltered and stagnated. Since Bush became President, the country has lost nearly 3 million manufacturing jobs, over 200,000 of them in Michigan. Democratic leaders such as Governor Jennifer Granholm and Senator Debbie Stabenow have the creativity, courage and conscience to find innovative and imaginative ways to secure a future of revitalized possibility and prosperity. As a Party we will demand that we move forward together and celebrate the American values of hard work and community, diversity, faith, family and personal responsibility. We are deeply committed to these values.

There was a time when Americans were challenged to ask not what their country could do for them, but what they could do for their country. In recent years, however, we seem to have become less interested in looking first to the needs of others – especially the needs of the most vulnerable – and more interested in meeting only the needs of ourselves. America has always been at its best when Americans ask not “what's in it for me,” but “what can I do to give back?”

The Michigan Democratic Party understands this basic principle. That is why Democrats in this state are seeking the Common Good – the best life for each person of this state. The orphan. The family. The sick. The healthy. The wealthy. The poor. The citizen. The stranger. The first. The last.

Seeking the Common Good is not difficult for Michigan's citizens to understand. Just ask the woman who watches her neighbor's son so mom can work to pay her heating bill. Ask the pastor, rabbi or imam who walks the street at night praying for the crime in his neighborhood to cease. Ask the dentist whose staff keeps telling her she's got to start charging families who don't have insurance. The people of Michigan deserve leadership with the moral courage that matches that of the people of Michigan.

By holding ourselves to this vision of the Common Good, Democrats have the integrity to deal with the challenges that face Michigan today. We address Michigan's economic situation while holding the “least of these” – our most impoverished, our least advantaged – at the forefront of our minds. We address security concerns while holding the “stranger” – immigrants and our brothers and sisters who live abroad – in the highest respect. We address our health care needs remembering the ill, the elderly, and the unemployed. In short, we do what is difficult, and we do what is right.

Michigan is showered with blessings – from the beach grass covering our sand dunes to the oil covering the hands of our assembly line workers. The people of Michigan who make it such a treasure deserve leadership who treasure them in return. In the Michigan Democratic Party and its candidates, Michigan's citizens will find just such leadership – leadership devoted to the Common Good.

As Democrats, we are proud of our elected officials who have worked so diligently to make our State and our Nation a better place for working families to earn a living and raise children. Senators Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow and our six Democratic Members of Congress have fought to protect Social Security, Medicare, educational programs and the environment from the extreme Republican agenda, while fighting terrorism, seeking comprehensive and affordable prescription drug coverage, accessible and affordable health care for all and corporate accountability. Governor Jennifer Granholm, Lt. Governor John Cherry, Democratic legislators and the Democratic members of Education Boards have fought hard to improve the lives of Michigan families. On the Michigan Supreme Court Justices Michael Cavanagh and Marilyn Kelly have vigorously resisted the right-wing agenda of the Republican justices.

We are committed to continuing our focus on the issues that matter most to working families in Michigan: creating good-paying jobs; preparing children to succeed in the public education system; providing high quality, accessible and affordable health care to all families; promoting financial security through economic growth and secure retirement benefits; stopping discrimination in all its forms; protecting voter rights; improving our state and local roads; and protecting our priceless natural resources for future generations.

We are committed to reelecting Governor Granholm, Lt. Governor Cherry and Senator Stabenow, regaining control of the Michigan Senate and House of Representatives, retaining and electing more Democratic Members of Congress, electing Democrats to Education Boards, reelecting Justice Michael Cavanagh and replacing Republican Justice Corrigan on the Michigan Supreme Court, helping Democrats win offices at the county level and defeating Ward Connerly's attack on affirmative action.

II. Invest in the People of Michigan

Effective, efficient and productive education and job training programs for children and adults are critical to build a stronger Michigan economy. We must work to ensure consistently high levels of economic development and performance. In order to accomplish these goals we must invest in post-secondary education and training for high-tech and other value-added jobs. The goal of this endeavor is making sure that no one is left behind and those who want to work can find the opportunity to do so in Michigan.

By improving the marketability of individuals, we will enhance the appeal for new companies to invest and expand in Michigan. A better-educated and more skilled workforce will also provide an incentive for existing businesses to remain in-state and retain the high-quality jobs that they provide, as well as lure businesses and jobs from outside the state.

Michigan must foster a culture that empowers people to turn their passions into products, services, profits and payrolls. It is vital that Michigan pour energy and resources into improving basic education, helping our universities and community colleges become even more important centers of research, thought and education, and making education more affordable.

As a state we must put forth more effort to become involved in global economic activity and trade opportunities. However, as Democrats, we still firmly insist on the implementation of basic human and worker rights, as well as environmental protections, as part of fair trade.

We need to take steps to extend economic opportunity based on knowledge and skill to those that have been isolated by poverty, lack of education, geography or discrimination.

We have to address the digital divide between those who have access to information technology resources and those who do not.

A. Support a quality of life that sustains economic growth and vibrant, prosperous communities

People examine quality of life issues when deciding where to live, locate a business, or educate their children. Today these factors drive economic development: Are there good schools? Are there cultural and recreational opportunities? Are there green spaces and clean lakes to enjoy? Is it safe and free of crime? Is there a vibrant community with shops, nightlife and entertainment? Are there educational and career opportunities? Is there access to quality, affordable health care? The importance placed on considering quality of life means we in Michigan must redouble our efforts at rebuilding our cities, be stewards of our state and its outdoors, support the arts, enrich our culture, improve our schools and invest in our two and four year colleges and universities.

B. Forge community out of racial diversity

In Michigan, as in the nation as a whole, the lines dividing our population are becoming increasingly blurred. Our challenge is to make diversity our strength and lead the way for the rest of the nation in building a successful pluralistic society. However, strong forces are at work continuing to separate us by race and income. We have some of the most racially segregated cities, suburbs, schools and housing markets in the nation. We have a long way to go to rectify these problems, but the Michigan Democratic Party is committed to eradicating racial discrimination and protecting affirmative action by defeating Ward Connerly's proposal.

C. Restore faith in the integrity and performance of government

Often government is stacked in favor of special interests, the wealthy and powerful and against the will of the people. If we are to rebuild faith and support for our public institutions we must be committed to substantive election, ethics and campaign reform and demonstrate that the public can expect and get access, integrity, honest leadership, open government and accountability.

D. Stand up for the underrepresented

Some of the greatest tests for society have always been: Do we respect the rights of all? Do we ensure that each and every person is given a voice and full representation in decision-making? When our citizens encounter hardships do we offer a helping hand? We must make sure everyone shares in our prosperity and renew our commitment to reach out to those in need.

III. Democratic Party Values

The Michigan Democratic Party reaffirms its commitment to our core values of opportunity, community, security and accountability. The Democratic Party is committed to closing the opportunity gap by investing in the people of Michigan and fighting to implement real and substantive measures that make a difference in the lives of working and retired families. In order to further advance our goals, we will endeavor to foster a greater sense of community and celebrate our rich diversity as a people and as a state. We must be secure as a state and nation. We will demand accountability from our government, leaders and business

community to ensure that the interests of working families are secure. This Platform is our plan to advance these values through political action and responsible public policy.

A. Opportunity

1. Improving public education for children and adults

The key to opportunity in the new economy is *education*.

Public education is the cornerstone of our social, economic and political structure. It is of the utmost significance in the development of our moral, ethical, spiritual and cultural values.

Michigan public schools successfully prepare citizens to be productive members of the new economy and to be thoughtful and active participants in government. We also value public schools as places that provide our communities with the common experiences that bind us together despite our unique differences. It is through these experiences that we can teach our children to recognize and celebrate cultural, social, political and religious differences.

A commitment to improve public education that realizes these ideals is central to our future as a state and the ability of all Michigan citizens to realize their full promise as individuals. The following is a core set of measures we Democrats promote to improve public education:

- *Strict accountability for results, strong incentives for success.* Every school in Michigan must succeed at reaching high academic standards and be held accountable for results. Governor Granholm created rigorous new curriculum standards to ensure that our children are ready to succeed in the 21st Century economy. We will fight to equip all teachers with the resources, including professional development that they need to meet these higher standards.
- *Unprecedented funding.* Under Governor Granholm's leadership, per-student public school funding has been increased to record levels and she proposed increasing it to \$7,100 per student for the first time in history.
- *Technology.* Democrats will ensure that our schools are equipped with the information technology students need to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. In order to accomplish this goal all of our schools must have ready access to the Internet. Teachers, support staff, students and parents must be educated to use technology to facilitate enhanced learning opportunities, communications and collaborations.
- *Secure, safe and orderly schools.* Under Governor Granholm, we now have tough new laws to keep sex offenders away from our schools and child care centers. We must also prevent school violence. Democrats propose to train school personnel in identification of violent behavior, phones and communication links in every classroom and training for counselors and teachers about how to educate students in peer mediation and conflict resolution. The Michigan Democratic Party is committed to substantive anti-bullying measures in all of our schools.

- *School modernization and repair.* Michigan Democrats believe that students need secure, safe and adequate classrooms and school facilities. There is a serious need for renovation and/or replacement of many of our older school buildings. School buildings must be inspected routinely and kept modernized and up-to-date.
- *Teacher pay and professional development.* Parents deserve to know that their children's teachers are well trained and certified. To attract and retain talented professionals to educate our children we also must make sure teachers are well paid, provided job security and treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve. Too many teachers are leaving the profession and many young adults never consider it because of the cost of becoming a teacher and uncertainty of being able to find and keep a teaching position which would allow one to financially support a family. Democrats support loans and dedicated scholarships to attract the best students to the teaching profession in addition to implementation of pay scales that keep dedicated teachers teaching. We support strong certification standards at state and national levels and ongoing re-certification requirements, while asking for public support of enhanced compensation for teachers equal to the responsibility of educating our children.
- *Fully fund No Child Left Behind.* The Bush Administration must fully fund this federal mandate, and amend it to lift schools up through researched-based strategies and programs.
- *Higher education available for all.* Higher education is vital to success in the new economy. Democrats want to make sure higher education and technical training in high-growth fields is accessible and affordable to all. Governor Granholm has proposed a new \$4,000 Merit Award scholarship available to every high school graduate to ensure that they can go to college or receive post-secondary training.
- *Public school choice.* There is public school choice throughout public education, within school districts, and across districts. However, when funds are not provided for transportation, this choice may not be equally available for everyone.

Since 1993, school choice has included charter schools which are public schools financed with public tax dollars. Democrats believe charter schools and their authorizers must be held strictly accountable in a meaningful way and that charter schools must conform to the same communication, freedom of information, financial disclosure, academic, collective bargaining and teacher certification standards and accessibility requirements as traditional public schools. We believe an essential step in enhancing accountability is to limit the involvement of for-profit and private management companies with charter schools.

- *No private or religious schools subsidized with public dollars.* We need improved public schools to bring us together. We do not need taxpayer money to underwrite schools that separate us by race or religion. While we put our resources and commitment into enhancing public school education and choice, it is inappropriate and counterproductive to allow public tax dollars to subsidize private and religious schools.
- *Smaller class size.* It is well proven that smaller class sizes contribute to improved academic success, especially in the early grades. Michigan Democrats have championed and funded

smaller class size programs in selected schools. We will work to take the next step to make certain that this successful program is expanded to all school districts in Michigan.

- *Bringing up underachieving schools.* Many of our schools excel, but we should focus on bringing all of Michigan's public schools up to world-class standards. In order to accomplish this goal, Michigan Democrats will focus on strengthening and improving education in our neighborhoods of greatest need. It must always be remembered that the number one way to improve education is to have a fully qualified teacher in every classroom, teaching subjects in which she/he is qualified without limiting teachers' ability to professionally evolve.
- *Fully fund special education.* Our students with special needs have been too often shortchanged. Michigan Democrats will ask Congress to pay the federal government's fair share of special education expenses.
- *After school programs* work to enrich student learning and provide supervised recreation. Michigan Democrats support before and after school programs, summer tutoring and year round use of schools for students and the community at large.
- *Expand preschool opportunities.* The importance of early education is well proven. Michigan Democrats support preschool opportunities for three and four year olds, adding to the existing network of Head Start, pre-K and related school programs.

2. An aggressive and comprehensive economic plan

Governor Jennifer Granholm has developed the nation's most comprehensive and aggressive economic plan.

Her \$3.8 billion Jobs Today program is creating tens of thousands of jobs around the state, putting people to work rebuilding our roads and bridges, cleaning up polluted sites and improving nursing homes.

The Governor's 21st Century Jobs Fund will create \$2 billion in investment that will diversify our economy by attracting the high-growth industries of tomorrow like life sciences, alternative energy, advanced manufacturing, and homeland security.

The MI Opportunity Partnership is connecting job seekers with available jobs and helping others get the training needed to land good paying jobs – it has already placed 107,000 people into work.

While there is much to be done, the Governor's plan is starting to work with companies like Google, American Axle, Keebler and Whirlpool bringing jobs to Michigan and keeping them here.

3. Improving the skills of our workforce

Democrats want to build a system that promotes lifelong learning and job training and preparation that helps both those entering the workforce and those on-the-job to continually improve their marketability and skills to take advantage of new opportunities by:

- *Improving literacy and expanding basic education.* Basic literacy and education are absolute

necessities in today's economy. Democrats support enhancement of the system of adult education to make sure all citizens get the basic tools necessary for success in today's economy.

- *Building a system for continuous job training.* The federal Workforce Investment Act gives states unprecedented flexibility to design a system that prepares the workforce for tomorrow. We should use that freedom to bring employers, unions, workers and educators together and decide on basic skills necessary for all adult entry-level workers, in addition to setting up a training system that develops these skills. Workers should have access to in-person counseling and information on jobs and training providers. While the freedom to use the Internet is good for many, others need access to in-person counseling, post-placement assistance and the additional support of an advocate. The system that we propose is the only option that will provide both sets of these crucial services.

Democrats support a basic education and workforce skills enhancement system that augments the pool of resources for basic and employability skills training. Democrats also favor increasing unemployment benefits at the maximum benefit rate, increasing benefits for those receiving less than the maximum and restoring indexing of benefits to inflation.

Democrats will work with key business sectors, including information technology, health sciences, autos and plastics to ensure that the current business/labor roundtable groups truly drive and shape the standards and programming for occupations in the state's technical schools, community colleges and vocational education systems.

4. A trade policy that works

Increased international trade has potential to increase economic opportunity in Michigan and with our trading partners - but only if attention is paid to ensure that trade benefits aren't one-sided. *Workers* must benefit, not just multi-national corporations, corporate executives, and shareholders. For trade to be a net benefit, labor and human rights, the environment and the collective health of all workers must be safeguarded. Michigan Democrats strongly support fair trade insisting that competitor markets are as open as our own. We believe government and corporations must provide assistance to workers who lose jobs because of trade. Corporations and government exist and must work to ensure health care and job retraining are in place as workers seek employment. We believe that all nations should be required and held accountable to maintain standards for working conditions including health and safety standards and the right to organize unions. There must be an effective trade monitoring and enforcement process in place to ensure that no violations go unpunished. To advance these goals Michigan Democrats will act to:

- Provide tax incentives for production and jobs in the U.S. and eliminate tax incentives for moving business operations and jobs overseas. Senator Stabenow led efforts to pass \$2 billion in tax cuts for manufacturers who create jobs in the U.S. rather than overseas.
- Renegotiate NAFTA/CAFTA to strengthen the labor, environmental, import surge and dumping provisions, and improve the investment sections which give corporations the right to sue governments to strike down health and safety, environmental and other laws and

regulations.

- Require NAFTA/CAFTA countries to raise their environmental standards to U.S. levels.
- Oppose the continuation of Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiations based on the flawed NAFTA/CAFTA model, with no effective labor and environmental protections and seriously inadequate import surge protections.
- Oppose reduction or elimination of the 25 percent U.S. tariff on imports of pickup trucks from Thailand and reject any trade agreement with Thailand if it reduces or eliminates the U.S. tariff on imported pickups.
- Urge Congress to demand that worker rights protections be included in any World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations and that U.S. trade laws must not be subject to any weakening changes.
- Create a Trade Prosecutor as advocated by Senator Stabenow to crack down on currency manipulators, technology pirates and trade law violators.
- Strictly enforce Communist China's market-opening commitments to the WTO; violations of such commitments should result in the filing of complaints against Communist China in the WTO. Push Communist China to increase the value of its currency against the dollar so that the artificial advantage it provides Chinese goods will be removed and the trade deficit can decline.
- Reduce the overall trade deficit and make this issue a national priority.
- Including human and worker rights language in all trade agreements.
- Help developing countries systematically raise their environmental standards to protect their own citizens and avoid creating incentives for production shifts to evade environmental standards.
- Provide adequate Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) funding for training and income support for all workers displaced by trade; implement improvements in the TAA program made in 2002; and improve income support benefits under the TAA program so workers will not suffer a serious loss of income while enrolled in training.
- Instruct U.S. directors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to insist on votes on all issues of interest to the United States and to vote against proposals that conflict with U.S. positions on worker rights and sustainable development.
- Add new criteria companies must meet to qualify for "Buy American" preference; companies must demonstrate fair treatment of their workers internationally, including non-violation of internationally defined worker rights by the company, its suppliers and subcontractors.
- Strict enforcement of domestic and international tax laws to ensure proper payment of corporate taxes by all multinational corporations and the U.S. operations of foreign-based corporations.

The opportunities and problems associated with trade are a two-way street. The Michigan Democratic Party wants trade to work for U.S. workers, and for our brother and sister workers abroad seeking their own better living standard. Our trade agenda stands for extending to workers around the world the opportunities we have here in the U.S. We have both a moral obligation to help poor nations develop and help their workers reap the benefits of their labor. We must develop trading partners that respect the civil, labor and human rights of their workforce while protecting their health and the global environment we all share.

5. Economic development in depressed urban and rural areas

We will develop our urban centers and rural communities. Democrats will promote policies and programs that create jobs and healthy neighborhoods. Democrats support investments in neighborhood fundamentals - schools, health care and infrastructure, including transportation options that help connect people with jobs. Democrats support the development of urban brownfield sites rather than developing green spaces, which adds to sprawl and the costs of public services.

6. Protecting our farms and rural communities

The family farm has been the foundation of Michigan agriculture, providing jobs and opportunity for thousands of Michigan families across our state. Agriculture is the second largest industry in Michigan, contributing over \$60 billion to the state's economy and employing over 500,000 Michigan workers. Michigan ranks second in the country for agricultural product diversity, growing over 125 different crops. As agriculture meets new economic and environmental challenges, the use of new technologies and new partnerships will sustain the family farm in Michigan, and the rural communities that rely on these farms.

7. Access to opportunity - transportation

A diverse and accessible transportation system, including regional transportation, is essential for the overall economic growth of the State but particularly in connecting people with jobs and opportunity. Democrats will continue to advocate and support improved funding and better planning and coordination of the public transportation system in the state budget. We will continue to focus transportation dollars on regional transportation and metropolitan needs and options - including local roads, bridges and public transportation.

8. Expanding access to technology

Information technology (IT) and how we use it is fundamentally changing our lives. Democrats want everyone to learn about and have access to IT resources, and be able to use those resources to learn, communicate, and improve the workings of government, business and society. As such, Democrats believe that:

- All state residents must have access to the same technology such as competitive cable TV and other high tech products. In today's information economy, "red-lining" technology can be as destructive as red-lining mortgages. Democrats want to make the Web universally available in part by supporting Internet access at public facilities - libraries, schools, community centers, employment centers and public agencies - particularly those in low-income areas where families are less likely to own computers.

- Public and private sectors should increase efforts to expand high-speed wireless communications, and provide computers and Internet access to more workers, students and communities.
- Michigan should be in the forefront in providing information and services on-line, while protecting people's rights to privacy by expanding E-government. Digital government efforts can simultaneously cut costs and improve services. Democrats want to make government easier to use and more responsive to the citizen. We can deliver services and information that help the public make informed decisions, through such techniques as E-government kiosks in state and municipal offices and expanded use of government web sites at all levels of government transactions done on line at lower cost.
- Provide better information for consumers. The public can make better decisions with better information about the performance of both public agencies and private actors. With public monitoring and oversight, strong incentives for improvements in public and private services will be created. That is why Michigan Democrats propose:
 - To better inform the public and improve health care services – require a public rating of health plans by the state, and post the results of nursing home inspections;
 - Provide on-line data on all schools, job training providers, and their performance;
 - On-line reporting of elected officials' wealth, income, political contributions, voting records, and contact information;
 - Develop an available on-line child-care service report, in order to share the results of state monitoring of childcare facilities.

9. Nurturing innovation, entrepreneurship, the self-employed and small business

We must build a culture of innovation that can lead us into the new economy. Owners of small businesses, the self-employed and their families have much more in common with the working people of Michigan than with large corporations. They share the financial struggles, demands of long hours and uncertainty about the future. The Democratic Party understands the contribution of small employers to the Michigan economy: The vast majority of all businesses in the state have fewer than 500 employees and they employ more than 50% of all workers. These business owners have taken risks that benefit us all. The hundreds of thousands of self-employed people also make a substantial contribution.

In order to make the state more friendly to small firms, Michigan Democrats propose the following small business agenda:

- The Governor's Michigan First Health Plan will help small businesses and their workers by providing universal access to affordable health insurance for all Michigan citizens.
- The Governor's Michigan Retirement Program for small businesses will enable them to offer a 401(k) to their employees.
- Assure real competition in energy deregulation. The current move toward deregulation in energy threatens to create "unregulated monopolies" instead of real competition. This

means that the energy monopolies can cut their best deals for big business at the expense of small firms and consumers.

- Simplify permitting for small firms. Businesses with only a handful of employees don't have a human resources department, a tax department or an environmental department. The Governor is leading the way with online permitting for businesses. She has shortened permitting time to as little as 3 months from 1½ years under the previous administration.

10. Incomes and taxes - rewarding work

Our opportunity policies *make work pay*, encourage participation in the work force and make sure lower and middle income people are paying only their fair share of tax, not carrying the brunt of the load. That is why Democrats support:

- *An increased minimum wage.* If we want people to work, poverty shouldn't be the reward for holding a full-time job. A minimum wage that keeps up with inflation has never had the negative effects predicted by critics, and has always served to boost the overall standard of living and economy.

In 2006 Governor Granholm, Michigan Democrats and their allies led a petition drive to increase the minimum wage, forcing an obstructionist Republican Legislature to raise the minimum wage for the first time in many years. Permanent indexing to inflation, updating the tip credit and eliminating unfair exclusions still need to be addressed.

- *Adequate, stable and fair tax system.* We must restore fairness to the tax system, and ensure that it is adequate to meet society's needs as well as stable. Michigan citizens deserve no less. The labor of working families is the reason for the long-term success of the American economy. People who work to build our great economy have earned the right to a fair share of the fruits of their productivity – to buy a home, save for a secure retirement, and fund a college education.

With Republican economics, workers take home less money in their paychecks because the burden of paying taxes falls disproportionately upon working families – both middle class and poor people. With billions in corporate welfare, subsidies, tax shelters and tax cuts, large corporations and the wealthy few fail to pay their fair share of the tax burden while working people and small businesses pay more than their fair share. During 2006, under the Bush and Republican federal tax cuts, households with incomes of more than \$1 million – the richest two-tenths of 1 percent – received an average tax cut of \$112,000 while middle class and poor taxpayers received a very small fraction of that. Our country's largest corporations and the wealthy few should pay their fair share.

- *A Michigan earned income tax credit.* The federal earned income tax credit allows workers and their families who are on that borderline between working and public assistance, extra credits *for working*. Many states have added to this credit - which is an effective incentive to work and to stay off welfare.

- *Help people move from welfare to work.* To get welfare recipients *into jobs*, Michigan Democrats support providing the training, affordable child care and transportation, and support to help them *stay on the job* and move up in their careers.
- *Pay equity.* Women in Michigan are paid only 67 cents for every dollar paid to a man. Michigan Democrats continue to support equal access to employment and pay.
- *An Employees' Bill of Rights.* Employees' rights are threatened by the use of off-duty, non-employment related activities to make employment decisions, up to and including discharge. Employees need protection from work-related discrimination based on off-duty conduct such as family status, health of family members, political activities, membership in lawful organizations, credit history, firearm ownership and so forth.

11. Family security

All working families face challenges in today's struggling economy: often two parents work and many raise children alone. Our seniors need provisions for income security and we all need affordable, quality health care.

The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world that has failed to provide a health care security blanket for all of its citizens. The Michigan Democratic Party reaffirms a commitment to a system of universal health care. In the most affluent society the world has ever known, there can be no excuse for further delay. We pledge to take steps to move our state and country to a system that provides access for all to affordable, quality health care.

As steps toward this goal Democrats will take the following actions:

- *Support Governor Granholm's Michigan First Health Care Plan* which will provide universal access to affordable health insurance for all Michigan citizens.
- *Portable health care.* Lifetime or even longtime employment with one employer is less frequent in today's economy. Health care should be portable from employer to employer at an affordable cost and managed by the employee.
- *HMO reform.* We will reform HMO practices so doctors aren't prevented from prescribing medically appropriate treatment and patients can get redress, including the right to sue HMOs for wrongdoing or negligence. ERISA should be amended to permit state legislatures to establish remedies to hold HMO's accountable. Democrats will ensure that both HMOs and the Department of Community Health respond to health appeals in a timely and understandable manner. Democrats also will guarantee coverage for second opinions, and make sure all patients can keep their doctor even if their insurance changes.
- *Embryonic Stem Cell Research and Funding.* This research holds great potential for helping millions of people by curing many of today's incurable ailments such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, diabetes and spinal cord injuries, among many others. The only embryos to be used for this research are unwanted and slated for destruction. As such, we support this research and federal and state funding of it.

- *Medicaid.* Governor Granholm has fought to protect the Medicaid program that provides health insurance for the poor with children, and increasingly the elderly.
- *Prescription drug coverage.* In Washington and Lansing, Democrats are advancing plans to help prescription drugs become affordable and accessible to all. Under Governor Granholm more than 297,000 people have received health care services and affordable prescription drugs. Senator Stabenow wrote legislation and successfully led efforts to lower prescription drug costs by allowing states to negotiate for better prices and expanding access to lower-priced generic drugs. She also stopped Bush Administration efforts to double prescription co-pays for Michigan veterans. We support the efforts of Senators Levin and Stabenow to fix the defects of Medicare Part D which are hurting our seniors.
- *Childcare and nursing home conditions.* Democrats will ensure that corporations that profit from the care of children and the elderly are held accountable for the safety and quality of that service.
- *Improve services to the mentally ill.* The closure of many mental health facilities and continued discrimination against the mentally ill by health plans and insurers have compounded the challenges faced by those needing these services and their families. Many populating our prisons are seriously mentally ill. All the citizens of Michigan are hurt by these problems. Michigan Democrats do not believe the solution to these issues is privatization of mental health services, but rather the strengthening of our public commitment to mental health.
- *Patient's Bill of Rights.* We support a comprehensive Patient's Bill of Rights.

12. Helping children flourish

All Michigan families and their children should have basic health care, education and safe childcare available. Too many children in Michigan are still falling through the cracks. Many parents worry about whether their schools and day care facilities are safe and providing a positive learning environment. Democrats will implement and extend programs like MiChild to ensure that no child is left without adequate health insurance.

- *Ensuring quality, affordable childcare.* There are almost 445,000 young children in need of childcare and about 355,000 licensed childcare slots. On average in Michigan, childcare costs about \$6,500 per child. Too many Michigan parents have to turn to unlicensed, unregulated childcare providers. Democrats will ensure all childcare providers are properly licensed and regularly inspected as well as close down unsafe and unhealthy centers and end the fall-off in oversight of childcare services.
- *School-based health care.* Democrats support school-based health centers to make sure all children get the attention they need and have the good health necessary to get the most of their education
- *Family friendly workplaces.* Democrats, who brought the Family and Medical Leave Act into existence, applaud and encourage voluntary measures that many employers are making to

create “family friendly” workplaces, including flexible hours, telecommuting and placing day care facilities on site. We support efforts to find ways to underwrite family leave opportunities.

B. Community

A core value for Democrats is strengthening our sense of community. Michigan Democrats believe strongly that *what we do together* is important and makes life rewarding. Working *together* we can achieve more than working *separately*. We all want to live in a place where we have ties to family, friends and neighbors; where we roll up our sleeves to work *together with our neighbors on issues* that improve our lives.

Key building blocks of a vibrant, prosperous community include:

- Active and vigorous participation in civic life -- voting, debating, agreeing;
- Being good stewards of Michigan’s natural resources and beauty;
- Keeping our air, water and neighborhoods clean and safe;
- Appreciating each other as people and individuals, not as stereotypes and strangers;
- Tackling common problems: from what our kids have to do after school, to what we want our streets and communities to look like;
- Enhancing our arts, cultural resources and the quality of life in our communities;
- Caring about each other and reaching out to those that have no one to care for them.
- Ensuring a fair, equitable and collaborative work environment which will enable a shared accountability between businesses and employees thus enhancing the growth of the community.

In shoring up our community, Michigan Democrats embrace a unified vision of environmental protection, community and economic development. We reject the notion that protecting our environment and fostering economic growth and thriving communities are in conflict. To achieve our vision for Michigan communities we place a priority on the following key concerns:

1. Clean water, air and open space

Our Michigan is a very special place. Part of what makes Michigan so unique and so attractive to generations that have moved here and generations yet to come is its natural beauty and resources. Our woods, fields and farms, the Great Lakes, over 11,000 inland lakes, and 50,000 miles of rivers and streams show that the outdoors is an important part of life to every

Michigan family. We all want our drinking water, where our children play, and where we live to be clean and safe. Michigan Democrats have one message - we insist on clean water, clean air, and open space for our children and ourselves. The interests of bow hunters and those who legally and responsibly use firearms for hunting and other sports should be protected. The Governor has expanded public access for hunting and fishing and has also worked hard to protect forest land.

Michigan has become a dumping ground for Canada's trash, which threatens the health of Michigan's people and its precious wildlife. Legislative Democrats forced passage of landmark legislation to curb the flow of out-of-state and Canadian garbage, legislation which Governor Granholm signed. Senator Stabenow led the fight for tougher border inspections to turn away trash containing hazardous wastes and illegal drugs. The powerful garbage lobby is now using the courts to thwart the people's will and we will fight them until the trash trucks stop.

Michigan has the intellectual, industrial and political resources to become a leader in environmental planning, development, and conservation for the 21st Century. We must encourage manufacturers, suppliers, retailers, and consumers to reduce the amount of waste in our environment and encourage reclamation of industrial and consumer waste.

- *Cleaning up the water.* Michigan citizens place a premium on high quality water for drinking, swimming, fishing and boating. With the Great Lakes, our water is a treasure. Michigan citizens should expect an environmental policy that prevents contamination rather than allowing it to occur and then forcing taxpayers to cover the costs of an expensive clean-up. Governor Granholm has signed legislation to keep toxic waste and invasive species out of the Great Lakes. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO's) must be regulated to protect water quality.
- *Protecting the Great Lakes.* Great Lakes water has been diverted by Illinois since the 1800s and coveted by Sunbelt states and entrepreneurs since the 1980s. As the State with the most to gain or lose in protecting the Lakes, Michigan should do far more to protect this world-class public resource from water raids and oil spills. Michigan should:
 - Ban any oil and gas exploration under the waters of the Great Lakes by state law. Any spill is too great a risk to the future of the Lakes. Senator Stabenow wrote the first ever federal law on oil and gas drilling in the Great Lakes.
 - Implement a water conservation program to help keep water levels from falling to historic lows;
 - Initiate both interstate and federal laws and agreements toughening standards against water diversions and withdrawals;
 - Initiate legislation to prohibit taxpayer-financed subsidies for companies that divert

water out of the Great Lakes basin;

- Initiate state law to ban the sale or transfer of groundwater out of the Great Lakes basin.

The Water Legacy Act proposed by Governor Granholm and enacted by the Legislature will achieve many of these goals.

In protecting our air and water we encourage intelligent use of market mechanisms to promote pollution prevention and reduction strategies, and to stimulate innovative solutions to environmental problems.

- *Smart Growth.* Michigan Democrats propose smart growth strategies and better land use that fosters livable communities, protects our farms and open space, and supports reinvestment in our great cities. Our smart growth agenda will focus development where our infrastructure of roads, sewers and utilities exists, saving the taxpayer money while encouraging urban redevelopment.
- *Alternative and renewable energy.* The Governor's 21st Century Jobs Fund will help expand alternative energy sources, and her policies are encouraging the use of ethanol, biodiesel and other alternative energy sources. For example, under her leadership Michigan has its first biodiesel plant. Senator Stabenow has successfully passed federal tax incentives to develop alternative fuels such as ethanol from Michigan crops.
- *Connecting communities.* New development focuses attention on the need for roads, sewers, new schools and communications connections, as well as concerns over pollution, sprawl, traffic and the costs of growth. Increasingly these issues spill over the boundaries of our individual 2,000 units of government. Furthermore, thanks to urban sprawl and economic polarization, Michigan is becoming even more separated by race, income and ethnicity. Michigan's housing markets have the highest indicators of racial segregation in the nation and our schools are among the most segregated in the country. Binding our communities together with respect for one another and an acceptance of our diversity is our goal in order to create a successful pluralistic society. There are steps we can take to encourage a working community of Michigan citizens. The Legislature must study the economics of mobile and pre-manufactured home purchases, lot rental and repossession in order to address grievances of mobile and manufactured home residents and surrounding communities, the claims of the "affordability" of this type of housing and the economics and adequacy of state and local inspection of multiple family housing.
- *Regional solutions to regional problems.* The transportation, economic development, environmental and related issues of the metro regions of Detroit, Grand Rapids, Traverse City, Flint, Kalamazoo and Lansing are regional in nature and require regional solutions. Democrats will encourage collaborative planning and decision-making that transcends arbitrary political boundaries and solves problems effectively

on a regional basis by working together. Encouragement of regional land management plans and tools that help local government's direct growth, such as transfer of development rights program, regional impact coordination, regional revenue sharing, impact fees, urban growth boundaries and urban service districts will also be a part of our strategy.

- *Equal and affordable housing.* We as Democrats affirm a commitment to equal access to decent and affordable housing for every person regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identification, and support aggressive enforcement of current fair housing laws to ensure an equal share in the American dream to all Michigan citizens. We also encourage policies that make housing affordable and encourage more integrated communities including the expanded use of housing subsidies and mixed income housing developments. In response to the problems of mobile home owners, Democrats will enact a Mobile Home Owners Bill of Rights.
- *Regional transportation solutions.* Transportation systems that help people commute and connect the total community are essential. Michigan Democrats will continue to advocate for enhanced funding and better planning and coordination of transportation investments in our metropolitan regions. Senator Stabenow worked to increase federal funding of Michigan roads by \$239 million, creating 61,500 new jobs.

2. Social justice and equal treatment under law

A community is based on trust that all are treated equally. In America all are *supposed to be* equal before the law. Democrats celebrate the fact that our society is increasingly diverse. We maintain our longstanding commitment to social justice - freeing individuals to pursue their dreams. In order to reap the benefits of diversity, we must continue to fight discrimination by breaking down barriers based on race, color, national origin, gender, religion, philosophy, language, marital status, sexual orientation and gender identification, age, height, weight, physical or mental disability -- or any other characteristic irrelevant to ability -- as well as end racial profiling, and instill a spirit of cooperation between cities, suburbs, and rural communities to build an inclusive society at all levels.

- *We will champion the cause of Civil Rights* for all citizens, working to eliminate all forms of discrimination, and nurturing more than tolerance, but the day-to-day, person-to-person interactions between all people that ultimately build trust and equality in mind and deed.
- *We oppose the insurance industry's unfair practice of redlining when setting insurance premiums.* This discrimination disproportionately and unfairly exploits the working poor and people of color in our urban communities.
- *Collective bargaining is a basic right of all employees* and has brought greater economic security, job safety and dignity for Michigan workers. To spread these benefits, pioneered in Michigan, Michigan Democrats fully support organizing and

collective bargaining throughout the private and public sectors. To facilitate these rights and benefits. Michigan Democrats seek to outlaw the use of permanent replacement workers in economic strikes; promote automatic card check recognition in organizing campaigns and mandatory arbitration in first contracts that don't reach agreement; establish severe penalties against employers who illegally discharge workers or close facilities for union activity; ensure equal time and place access to workers for union organizers; and prevent bankruptcy courts from canceling collection bargaining agreements.

- *We pledge our support for reproductive freedom*, but we respect the individual conscience of each American on this difficult issue. We strongly support family planning, child care and adoption programs such as those in Governor Granholm's pregnancy reduction initiative.
- *We will vigorously promote measures that ensure the full civil rights of Michigan's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens.* The Michigan Democratic Party supports the inclusion of LGBT persons in the Elliot-Larsen Civil Rights Act and Michigan's Ethnic Intimidation Act. We support full inclusion of LGBT families in the life of our State and seek equal responsibilities, benefits and protections for those families, including the right to adopt and raise children. We call for the repeal of 2004 Proposition 2 which adds discrimination to our State Constitution. Moreover, we oppose measures that aim to criminalize same-gender relationships and conduct.
- *Michigan citizens have the right to personal safety and security in their homes, workplaces and communities*, including protection from sexual harassment.
- *We will insist on ending the insidious practices of racial profiling and unlawful targeting* of African-Americans, Arab-Americans and LGBT citizens (among others) for harassment, entrapment and selective law enforcement.
- *We will fight age discrimination* in all its forms.
- *Ensure justice before the bench.* The State Bar of Michigan has recognized that the courts today are stacked against the people, particularly minorities and women. As the Party that has worked to turn the civil rights revolution into a living reality for all people, Michigan Democrats pledge to continue our commitment to maintain the gains won, and maintain our fight for equality.
- *We stand for the rights of immigrants* and facilitate their acceptance as citizens and part of the Michigan family. We applaud efforts by the Open Justice Commission to provide language interpreters in court and to take other steps to make the legal process more user friendly to those unaccustomed to English.
- *We continue our commitment to Native American tribes and their sovereignty, self-governance*, self-determination and development of constructive government-to-government and person-to-person relationships.
- *Non-represented Workers Bill of Rights.* We support the right of non-represented workers to a fair, equitable, collaborative and economically healthy work environment

which will enable a shared accountability between an employer and non-represented employees for the betterment of the economic environment in Michigan.

We strongly oppose the so-called and misnamed “Michigan Civil Rights Initiative” sponsored by Ward Connerly which would end necessary affirmative action programs upheld by the United States Supreme Court.

We believe the time has come to promote an “Economic Bill of Rights” which includes:

- The right to a decent job, where a worker’s right to bargain collectively for fair wages and safe working conditions is reaffirmed, and a non-represented worker’s bill of rights is established;
- The right to decent and affordable housing and medical care;
- The right to social services sufficient to meet basic human needs;
- The right to clean air, water and renewable sources of energy, and to be free from unfettered and discriminatory invasion of toxic pollutants in our communities and workplaces;
- The right to economic and social security to future generations of older Americans;
- A shareholder’s bill of rights to empower individuals to protect and properly manage their investments.

3. Supporting those who need a hand

A community is based on reaching beyond self-interest to care about each other. Michigan Democrats call on all the people of Michigan to *reach out to each other*, particularly to support those at the beginning and at the end of life. Democrats hold, as Hubert Humphrey said, that the moral test of government is how we treat those who are in the dawn of life, the twilight of life, and those in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the disabled. Some areas for collective action include:

- *Institute 2-1-1 as a national abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human services information and referrals.* It connects individuals and families in need with the appropriate community-based organizations and services and enables people to better navigate the sometimes complex maze of human services’ agencies and programs. 2-1-1 is technology that improves the quality of life for individuals, families and communities.
- Launch an all-out effort to prevent and treat lead poisoning in children;

- Lead the way in supporting cleanup of industrial emissions that cause levels of ozone unsafe for kids and support energy efficient technologies and mass transit that reduce such emissions;
- Require businesses using the most hazardous chemicals to develop pollution prevention plans;
- Ban the establishment or relocation of new sources of toxic pollution close to schools, day care centers, and other places where children live and play.

4. Ensure retirement security for seniors

Michigan seniors deserve dignity and security in retirement, affordable health care, and public accommodations and services which recognize the growing age of the population, and provide for their ease and comfort in later years.

From 2000-2020 the population of citizens over 65 will increase over 30% and the number of people aged 85 and older in Michigan will rise over 28%. Caring for our parents is an increasing concern and financial challenge for Michigan families. Only 1% of state citizens have long-term care insurance and the cost of this insurance is skyrocketing. Seniors deserve the opportunity to live independently and the availability of quality options for living when they need assistance.

Michigan Democrats promote new options for home care, independent living tax credits for dependent care for Michigan families, and additional protections for seniors' homes and property allowing them to keep their homes and still get quality care where possible.

- *Protect Pensions.* Millions of Michigan citizens depend upon pensions for their livelihood. Recent economic circumstances, and in some cases corporate malfeasance, have had a drastic negative effect upon many pensions, and those who earned the money which was invested. The Michigan Democratic Party is committed to ensuring that companies that benefit from the investment of pension funds adhere to strict independent accounting standards which provide for: prompt resolution of accounting discrepancies; auditor independence; strong prohibitions against companies improperly influencing or misleading an auditor; audit committee oversight; shareholder proposals and participation; shareholder approval of stock options; and strict limits on preferential treatment, loans and gifts to management and directors. Bankruptcy courts should not be able to take away pension rights.
- *Keep Social Security and Medicare solid.* Democrats advocate plans at the federal level to keep Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid fully funded and dependable for future generations. We oppose privatization of Social Security. Medicare must include adequate prescription drug coverage, not the Bush program.

- *Improve nursing home conditions.* Michigan's nursing homes are an important refuge for our ailing senior citizens. These facilities and their residents have too often been neglected. Minimum staffing standards have been ignored and training for staff is inadequate. Democrats will make sure staffing is adequate, inspections are frequent, and that training and incentives are provided for nursing home workers. This must include both incentives to reward quality nursing homes and sanctions adequate to ensure those irresponsible facilities and their operators do not abuse the trust placed in them.

5. Nurture democracy and promote civic participation

Voting is the major way we make our voice heard in a democracy and Michigan Democrats propose bold action to improve public participation, make voting easier, make sure every vote counts and ensure all with the right to vote have the opportunity to make their voice heard.

- *Abolish the Electoral College.* We support abolishing or reforming the undemocratic Electoral College and electing our President by direct popular vote.
- *New voting options.* Democrats will foster increased voter participation by expanding existing vote by mail capability, promoting same-day registration, exploring weekend voting, making election day a national holiday, establishing early voting and no-reason absentee voting, working to require employers to accommodate employees' voting rights and investigating the promise and potential pitfalls of new technologies such as Internet balloting. The successful use of vote by mail and Internet voting in our 2004 Presidential Caucuses should encourage innovation. All voting devices must have a verifiable and recountable paper trail.
- *Enforce and improve voting rights laws.* The federal Voting Rights Act makes it clear that it is the job of state election officials to encourage participation and make it easier for citizens to exercise their rights - not harder. Voter intimidation and harassment are unacceptable. Republican legislation limiting voting, among students and through a poll tax such as a photo ID requirement, are clear violations of both the spirit and letter of the federal law and need to be overturned. The state Board of Canvassers provides an important safeguard against a partisan Secretary of State and the Board should not be weakened. Fraud in petition signature gathering, such as occurred in Connerly's effort to ban affirmative action, must be made illegal. The NVRA and HAVA must be strengthened such as by establishing national election standards.
- *Reform the redistricting process* to end partisan gerrymanders.

6. Faith and our Party

Throughout our country's history, people of faith have played a major role in many of the great reforms of American society, such as the abolition of slavery and the Civil Rights

movement. Leaders of those reform movements—people like Abraham Lincoln and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—were inspired by faith and used religious terminology in advocating their causes, allowing them to appeal to the best aspects of our nature and to call our Nation to the better futures they envisioned.

The voices of the faithful have been an important part of our past, and they remain important as we confront new problems and challenges in the future. At times, Democrats have struggled to strike the difficult balance between abiding by the Constitutional mandate to protect individuals' freedom of religion while also preventing the establishment of state-supported religion. However, the central role faith plays in the lives of millions of Americans, and millions of Democrats, cannot be ignored. Democrats recognize the important contributions the faith community has made throughout American history in caring for the least and last among us and helping to keep our country's moral compass true. And so as Democrats, we welcome and encourage the active involvement of people of faith in shaping the values, priorities, and policies of the Michigan Democratic Party, our state, and our nation as we seek the Common Good.

7. Building a global community

While our attention is focused on Michigan, no one can deny the importance of recognizing the issues facing our State and nation in the international arena. We must manage the delicate balance of our freedom with our national and state security through exploring alternatives to legislation such as the Patriot Act that restricts our civil liberties. It is imperative to the health of Michigan's economy that we maintain open borders with our neighbors, yet it is necessary to implement safety measures at our borders without impairing our open trade and travel routes. We must discourage the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and fight terrorism. And we must establish and enforce stronger international labor and environmental rights.

- *With Africa.* We believe that continuing to help the people of Africa nurture their continent's extraordinary potential and address its serious problems such as ethnic cleansing, famine, poverty and AIDS are both the right thing to do and ultimately in all of our interest. The humanitarian crisis in Sudan must be ended. American leadership on these issues is vital.
- *With Asia.* We support efforts to work for economic stability and human rights in Asia. We applaud the important security charter with Japan and close cooperation with the Republic of Korea toward the goal of a unified and non-nuclear peninsula. We support a policy of steady engagement to encourage a stable, secure, open and prosperous China and we also support a "One China" policy and peaceful resolution of cross-Straits issues. We are committed to building long-term relationships with South Asian countries such as India and Pakistan in order to advance our diverse interests in that region, including nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful resolution of their differences.
- *With Europe.* We believe that the security of Europe remains a vital American interest. We applaud efforts to foster a peaceful, democratic and undivided Europe,

including expanded support for reform in the former Soviet Union and other communist states and increased assistance to these former Soviet states. We are committed to the political and economic development and independence of the former Soviet states. We seek a democratic, prosperous and peaceful Russia. We support the full implementation of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland.

- *With Latin America.* We are committed to working toward the continued growth of democracies in Latin America. We are also committed to further consolidating democracy and stability throughout the hemisphere.
- *With the Middle East.* We fully support a Middle East peace process, including the Oslo Agreements signed by the Palestinian Authority and Israel, which call for negotiations to guarantee the territorial integrity, security and political rights of the parties to the negotiations.
- *In North America.* We are committed to a continuing strong relationship with Michigan's largest trading partner, Canada.

C. Security

1. Collective security by promoting personal accountability

We incarcerate people when they fail the first test of personal accountability by violating our laws and the rights of others. Our collective security is at stake in the individual actions of others. The safety and security of our neighborhoods is a primary concern of Michigan Democrats. We have taken dramatic steps in recent years to toughen sentences for violent crime, lock up criminals and fugitive felons, and protect our children by expelling juveniles from schools for acts of violence. Democrats have led the way in putting more police on the street and in our neighborhoods. These measures have had the desired effects. We have succeeded in getting tough on crime - and locking up criminals.

Simply continuing to lock up an increasing number of people is not in our best interest however, considering the high costs of housing prisoners and building new facilities to replace those that are outdated or augment those that are overcrowded. We need to do more to *prevent* crime. Today the state houses over 49,000 convicts, up from 15,000 just twenty years ago. The corrections budget eats a significant portion of the total state budget. Now many of those locked up under these tough laws have done their time, and are returning to Michigan communities - literally hundreds each year. In many cases they are worse off than when they went in.

Stopping crime before it starts. We must increase our activities dedicated to crime prevention by stopping the costs and problems before they occur. Building more prisons is not an anti-crime program. We must get illegal guns off the streets and out of the hands of dangerous felons while protecting the rights of law-abiding responsible gun

owners.

Once expelled from school, juveniles can't be left to roam the streets, but must be required to be enrolled in effective alternative education programs, structured to teach discipline, responsibility, and the academic skills they need to be productive citizens. We must restore judicial discretion in the adjudication and sentencing of juveniles.

Michigan is a full partner in the federal 21st Century Schools initiative providing after school learning activities in our most distressed neighborhoods. Democrats propose additional grants and incentive programs for after school and in-school peer mediation programs that are proven to reduce juvenile violence and delinquency. Democrats will expand local Safe Haven before and after school programs, pass truancy legislation to notify parents of a child's absence, and expand Michigan's school readiness programs to provide additional pre-school learning to all at-risk children.

We need substance abuse and mental health intervention and treatment before crimes are committed. A large majority of those in prison have drug or alcohol abuse problems. Prevention of drug and alcohol problems will reduce crime.

We need to prevent and reduce domestic violence with its terrible costs to victims and society. Law enforcement and the courts must give priority to domestic violence.

Prison reform. We need to expand efforts to educate and train convicts, and help them deal with substance abuse and mental health issues, so they do not reenter the streets of our communities without a chance at successful rehabilitation. Michigan prisons have been serving as our mental health institutions which must stop.

2. Fighting terrorism

We support the fight against domestic and international terrorism in all their forms. However, we should not and will not sacrifice civil rights and liberties, nor permit discrimination in this fight. The Patriot Act should be amended for these reasons.

3. Energy security

Reducing dependency on foreign energy and becoming energy self-sufficient both as a nation and a state is paramount to maintaining our security, freedom and standard of living. We cannot be held hostage to our energy needs. The Governor has called for the development of a 21st Century Energy Plan. The Democratic Party supports:

- Research and development of renewable and alternative energy sources.
- Ensuring that Michigan citizens are paying a fair price for energy by preventing price-gouging.
- Assistance to those who need help in paying their energy bills.
- Instituting energy-saving and conservation measures.

D. Accountability

Democrats believe *government and corporations must be accountable to people*. In a civil society, all institutions, private and public, must be accountable for their actions. Democrats believe we must take strong measures to improve the connection between the public and our government, and help the public hold those that deal with them, including corporations, clearly accountable for mistreatment and misdeeds. We also must forge a culture that encourages individuals to take responsibility for their lives and for how they interact with others. Major challenges we face increasing government, corporate and individual accountability include:

1. A judicial system that is responsive to the people, not to special interests

Justice is the foundation of democracy. When the administration of justice is influenced by money, as has been the case with the current Republican majority on the Michigan Supreme Court, our most treasured values suffer. Democrats want to restore balance to a judicial system that has become the handmaiden of the powerful and rich.

Special interests have given millions of dollars in political contributions to the Republican justices who rule for them and for laws that benefit corporate interests. The ultra-conservative and extremist Republican judges have used their positions on the Michigan Supreme Court to attack long-standing civil rights laws, consumer protection laws, labor laws and environmental regulations. When conscientious lawyers complained about the Court's transparent pandering to big money, they tried to silence their critics. Michigan needs a Supreme Court that will protect and defend the Constitution and the individual.

2. A political system not captive to money and special interests

Democrats want to make sure government is not for sale to the highest bidder and that the people's voice is heard. Democrats will consistently and relentlessly push for reforms that diminish the role of special interests, make government more accountable and easier to understand and insist on openness and integrity among our elected officials.

We supported the federal Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, also known as McCain-Feingold. Michigan Democrats' campaign and governmental reform agenda includes:

- *New contribution limits.* Limit contributions from all sources to all political committees (PAC's) and parties each year and keep limits on contributions to candidate campaigns. Right now some rich individuals and organizations can give unlimited amounts to a variety of groups to buy influence in elections and government. The rich should not have more voice than others in getting government attention and action.

- *Full disclosure of political contributions* to candidates, parties, political foundations and independent groups. Currently many campaign donors and sources of money aren't disclosed. Democrats would extend reporting requirements to the new political foundations, contributions to parties, independent expenditure organizations and other groups used to evade disclosure requirements. The Democrats would prohibit the use of contributions until all contributor information has been collected and reported.
- *Require politicians to disclose their personal finances.* Candidates and officeholders need to reveal their income and personal wealth when they seek and hold office. Federal elected officials already do so - state and local elected officials should as well using the federal disclosure model.
- *Put in place stronger ethics legislation* requiring candidates and elected and appointed officials to reveal and avoid conflicts of interest.
- *Substantially reduce the use of soft money and require accurate "labeling" on independent ads run on behalf of candidates.* Organizations and individuals steer money through other organizations where it is spent on campaigns with no disclosure of its source. A growing number of ads for and against candidates during an election are paid for by "third parties" and "independent groups". While doing nothing to prohibit groups from getting their message out, Democrats would close the soft money window by limiting the amount of money individuals and any organization can give to other organizations and require all organizations to report the source and nature of contributions. All ads run by independent groups, committees and organizations would include acknowledgement of the funding source(s) so the public would know exactly what group is behind the ad; and not the cute cover name "Alliance for Progressive Good Things", but the name of the individuals or organizations that paid for the ad.
- *Voluntary public financing program* for all statewide elected officials. A program - now operating in 5 states and in Michigan for gubernatorial elections - that allows candidates for office to voluntarily limit their spending on campaigns in return for a share of a public financing pool liberates candidates and elected officials from being beholden to interest groups, frees them to talk to citizens and do their job, and not have to raise money all the time. Democrats encourage a statewide system that includes many of the above measures and a public financing component -- as a first step the Michigan gubernatorial system should be expanded to include all statewide-elected official including judges.
- *Public airwaves for public decision-making.* Money drives campaigns and a large measure is due to the high cost of TV and radio ads. Michigan Democrats encourage our Congressional Delegation to make it possible for our publicly funded communications channels and the companies that operate

them to participate in a plan for free TV communication during campaigns.

- *Facilitate positive active issue discussion between candidates.*
- *End the contractor - contributor merry-go-round.* There is an obvious conflict of interest when recipients of state and local government grants and dollars are allowed to make campaign contributions. Contractors should not be able to buy elected officials' consideration. Democrats will ban such donations at the State level and encourage local communities to do the same.

3. Insist on corporate accountability

Democrats believe corporations must be held accountable for their behavior when they step over the line. We pledge a government committed to holding corporations, their accountants, boards and executives accountable, and fighting for the public's interest. In many areas there is an important, recently neglected role for the state as the guardian of the health, safety, and public interest against excesses of the private sector based on greed and negligence. This is particularly true when corporations receive government funds.

- *Workplace safety.* Workers should not risk death, illness or injury on the job. MIOSHA must protect workers' safety and when workers are injured on the job, they need a reasonable safety net provided by worker compensation, with predictable benefits to tide them over until they can return to work.
- *Childcare and nursing home conditions.* The safety and quality of Michigan's childcare facilities and nursing homes have been ignored by the Republican Legislature. Democrats, however, will ensure conformance to responsible safety, hygiene standards and appropriate training of caregivers. Corporations that profit from childcare must be held accountable for the safety and quality of their service.
- *Corporate responsibility.* The current economic and corporate environment has resulted in significant losses for those who invest their money in public companies, expecting that their interests would be protected, and that companies will act with integrity in safeguarding those investments. The Michigan Democratic Party supports *strong* investor protections, including a shareholder's bill of rights; public company oversight board; inspections, investigations and disciplinary actions; auditor independence; strong federal regulation of the accounting industry; corporate responsibility on the part of CEOs, CFOs and other executive officers; and enhanced financial disclosure.

Democrats support corporate bankruptcy reform that protects American workers. Too often, corporations reward executives for the company's failure, while using current bankruptcy laws to hide off-shore assets and cut wages and benefits for workers and retirees. Workers must retain solid pension plans

so that in the event of a corporate bankruptcy they are first among creditors.

- *Respect Employees.* Recognize that employees are also customers and without appropriate compensation for their efforts they will stop purchasing products and services. Understand that the majority of individuals inherently want to use their skills and talents to contribute to the good of society. Protect and defend their individual constitutional rights and freedoms both in and away from the workplace.
- *Enforcement of environmental laws.* For thirty years, we in Michigan made headway in cleaning up our air and water. During the Engler Administration we moved *backward*. Republicans failed to enforce the environmental laws we have. Michigan Democrats believe an important measure of accountability in government is strong environmental protection laws along with the vigorous enforcement of those laws. Governor Granholm has led the way to stronger enforcement of our environmental laws.
- *Preserve food safety.* We support food safety legislation to ensure adequate inspection, testing, and comprehensive and informative labeling of all domestic and imported food, including organic food.

4. Protect consumers

Consumer rights can too easily be trampled by the unscrupulous. Reasonable and effective consumer safeguards are essential to holding corporations, insurers, financial institutions and all those who operate in the marketplace accountable. We propose to elect officials such as an Attorney General who will be an advocate for the people, and to do the following:

- End the practices of redlining and credit scoring;
- Make the Michigan Consumer Protection Act applicable to insurance companies;
- Make the Michigan Insurance Commissioner directly accountable to the voters and provide for direct election of the Insurance Commissioner;
- Give the Insurance Commissioner stronger enforcement authority to hold health, disability and auto insurance companies accountable;
- Restore accountability for negligent product design and manufacturing defects;
- Restore joint and several liability so that the innocent victim is not penalized, but that all the wrongdoers are punished;

- Allow for punitive damages;
- Allow aggrieved consumers the right to obtain a legal remedy for “bad faith” against insurance companies who fail, or refuse to, negotiate claims in good faith, with a provision for recovery of the consumers’ cost and attorney fees;
- Amend Michigan’s Constitution to protect a person’s right to a trial by jury in all civil actions to determine the amount of damages which are appropriate to be awarded in a case free from any legislative restrictions.

Today’s e-commerce world is providing new opportunities to deceive the public. These schemes must be exposed and stopped. Areas where Democrats believe stronger consumer protections are warranted, and new approaches to deal with Internet fraud and other new forms of fraud are needed include:

- Protection from unsafe and defective products;
- Protection against counterfeit drugs;
- Internet privacy protection - companies that illegally resell information about consumers and their personal and buying habits to third parties;
- Unscrupulous investment schemes preying on the elderly;
- Bogus estate tax and tax shelter operators;
- Require insurance companies to pay claims in good faith;
- Excessive ATM fees and other credit and service charges charged by financial institutions;
- Phone and cable bills that obscure charges, services and costs;
- Item pricing and plain English contracts;
- Affordable auto insurance with adequate benefits.

While motor vehicles are now safer, many Michigan motorists are injured in automobile accidents, lose the ability to earn an income and incur massive medical expenses. Too often, these accident victims suffer further when their No-Fault insurance carrier fails to honor the promise in the insurance contract. We must protect Michigan’s drivers by requiring the following:

- Auto insurance companies to advise claimants – in plain English – of the personal injury protection benefits to which they are entitled if involved in a coverer auto accident;

- Require No-Fault insurance carriers to open their books to justify their rates charged to consumers;
- Require auto insurers to notify drivers that Uninsured Motorists and Under Insured Motorists coverage exists and to disclose whether they offer these coverages;
- Increase the residual liability insurance (minimum required third party liability auto insurance benefit coverage) to \$100,000 from the \$20,000 set in 1973 and increase the no-fault replacement services benefit to \$100/day from the current \$20/day both of which have not been indexed for inflation since 1973;
- Amend the government immunity statute so that state and county government and its employees are held accountable for serious injuries and death suffered by victims of defective signage and design of public roads.

5. Protecting Consumers of Medical Services: Holding the Healthcare Industry Accountable for Blunders and Refusal to Pay Claims

According to the National Academy of Sciences, up to 98,000 people are killed each year as a result of medical errors in hospitals; far more than die from car accidents, breast cancer or AIDS. The impact of these blunders by the healthcare industry on families is tragic and permanent, and the impact of these blunders on our economy is significant: total national costs (lost income, lost household production, disability and healthcare costs) of hospital negligence are estimated to be between \$17 billion and \$29 billion each year. Only a small minority of the victims of health industry malpractice ever file a claim, and even fewer ever receive compensation for those blunders. Yet, the healthcare and insurance industries have used their powerful resources to mislead lawmakers and consumers into believing that the centuries-old right to hold a careless medical provider accountable before a jury of your peers is the reason why these powerful industries are failing to provide quality medical care to our families. As a result, the health insurance industry regularly gets away with unreasonable refusals to pay the medical care that your doctor has determined you or your loved ones need. In addition, the healthcare and insurance industries and their political action committees have supported Republican legislators and judicial candidates who changed the law so as to severely restrict the right of a victim of medical industry malpractice to obtain any remedy in a court of law. To protect patients, we propose the following:

- Requiring insurance companies to pay doctors, clinics and hospitals for the services rendered, or provide a justified rejection of a claim for payment, within 30 days of submission of the claim (similar to the no-fault act, and laws in a number of other states);
- Eliminate procedural obstacles now imposed under Michigan law which prevent

victims of serious medical malpractice from obtaining a reasonable remedy and from holding the medical industry accountable for preventable serious permanent injury or death;

- Restore the centuries-old right of a jury to judge the evidence and to determine damages in wrongful death and malpractice cases without artificial limits imposed by recent statutes designed to protect special interests at the expense of the health of Michigan's people;
- Require disclosure of all documents produced in any hospital investigation into an adverse event so as to ensure that careless providers are identified and held accountable and to develop means of preventing future malpractice;
- Allow a living person whose provider carelessly failed to diagnose a serious medical condition (such as breast or colon cancer) to sue for a lost opportunity to survive;
- Protect patients from discriminatory practices resulting in neglect of treatment because of disability, race, religion, gender, age or sexual orientation and from abuse in healthcare institutions such a nursing home.

6. Local control

The most accountable government is the government closest to the people. The Democratic Party supports local control of decision-making functions, and opposes efforts to determine from Lansing local environmental, civil rights and employment issues. This is why Governor Granholm vetoed Republican legislation preempting local living wage ordinances. The Michigan Democratic Party is committed to revenue-sharing and in protecting the safety and fiscal integrity of every Michigan community.