

Platform of the **Madison County Democratic Committee**

Preamble

We, the Madison County Democrats, inspired by the belief of our founding fathers in “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness,” are committed to a mission of securing and promoting these blessings for all, both at home and abroad. Seeking a government that, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, is “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” we embrace progressive principles that will move us forward and create a stronger democracy in order to help us better deal with America's local, state, national, and international issues.

In the progressive spirit that began with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and continues with Barack Obama, we insist on preserving our social and economic gains, on safeguarding our civil liberties, on protecting our personal and national security, on protecting our environment, on conserving our national resources for the benefit of this and future generations, and on favoring policies that support the bedrock of a strong and just society—our families and our local communities.

We insist on **restoring fiscal responsibility** in Washington and reject all irresponsible tax cuts benefitting mostly the rich and the super-rich.

We want to eliminate the use of Social Security and Medicare contributions to cover recurrent budget deficits caused by irresponsible tax cuts. We oppose any attempt to weaken and ultimately destroy America's health care by privatizing Medicare and eroding, or even eliminating, the Affordable Care Act.

We oppose the practice of burdening county and municipal governments with **unfunded federal and state mandates**. We believe that the practice in New York State of using multi-billion dollar bond issues to finance ongoing programs instead of using annual appropriations reduces accountability and increases the long-term cost of these programs.

We believe that the **right of dissent** must be protected at all times. We condemn any attempt to discredit dissent by questioning the patriotism of citizens who criticize government policies. We oppose the renewal of those provisions in the Patriot Act that unnecessarily erode our constitutional rights.

As rural New Yorkers, we support state and national policies that ensure the **viability of family farms** and protect our rivers and lakes from the devastating pollution

of acid rain, PCBs, mercury, lead, and other contaminants. We support cooperative initiatives of government, business, and nonprofits that support economic and community development in upstate New York.

Believing in responsible and **lawful gun ownership** by responsible adults and in reasonable regulations, such as thorough background checks, to ensure that gun ownership does not threaten the community and its law enforcement officers, we support strengthening the Brady Bill and renewing the ban on assault weapons.

We believe that every individual must be guaranteed full and equal protection under the law, regardless of race, color, ethnic identity, national origin, religion, creed, sex, sexual identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, or economic status. Everyone should be empowered to develop their full potential by means of a nurturing childhood, a formal education, and an equal opportunity for training and employment.

We support improved family assistance programs, an expanded early childhood education program, free vocational training, and a subsidized higher education that everyone can afford. A strong public education system sustains a democratic society committed to the ideal of equality and helps create and sustain a vibrant middle class. To this end, we seek a strong financial support of our public education system to ensure that, in the wealthiest nation in the history of mankind, every child has well-qualified teachers, suitable facilities, and the resources necessary to achieve excellence.

We support affirmative action in order to ensure that our increasingly diverse population is adequately represented in all trades and professions. We support the removal of barriers to career advancement that may hinder those who have been disadvantaged on account of socioeconomic status, gender, race, disability, age, or family status.

We recognize that we are a nation of immigrants and refugees in which everybody should be under the equal protection of law. Our current immigration policies leave millions of workers trapped in the shadows of our economy. **We favor a fair, a realistic, and a sustainable immigration system** that screens and inspects people and cargo at the border for security threats and grants legal status to hardworking immigrants. We support policies that extend educational and civic participation to our immigrant community.

We believe in the separation of church and state. Because we cherish our freedom of conscience, we are as opposed to restrictions on the free exercise of religion as we are to the imposition of religious observances, such as mandated prayers in public schools.

We will fight for a woman's right to make private and personal decisions regarding **reproductive choice** without interference or restriction from the government.

As enlightened and responsible progressives, we believe all are entitled to lead a life in dignity and security. Much more must be done to assist the physically and mentally impaired and to abolish our nation's shameful category of the working poor. Rural poverty, as well as urban poverty, weakens family bonds and breeds despair and delinquency. We believe that the changing economic, social, and technological conditions call for innovative approaches and progressive solutions.

The dignity of life requires adequate shelter, nutrition, education, gainful employment, provision in old age, affordable child care, and health care for all. In the wealthiest country on earth, we will not tolerate continued homelessness and poverty—conditions that enlightened and compassionate social policy has eliminated in most advanced industrial democracies. We believe that social policies can, and must, compensate for the inequities that a free-market economy can bring with it.

The dignity of labor requires that workers and employees be guaranteed by law the unrestricted right to organize and bargain collectively with corporate management. Public law should protect this right as effectively as it protects the rights of investors and property owners. Public law should protect hard-earned pensions and other employee benefits against the arbitrary power of unscrupulous corporate interests.

Every worker is entitled to a living wage with overtime compensation for hours worked beyond the normal work week. The statutory minimum wage in New York State should be raised to the level of a living wage, which, in the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, supports a “decent living” at “more than a bare subsistence level.” Such a minimum wage law could set a lower level for temporary and part-time workers under the age of 18.

We support **equal pay for equal work**. We support federal and state infrastructure projects which will help provide good jobs, but which will also recognize the critical importance of **women's economic security** to our families and to our economy. We support ending pregnancy discrimination and family-responsibilities discrimination. We support encouraging girls and women to pursue higher-income career fields. We encourage policymakers to support economic stimulus programs that offer equal opportunity for all.

We encourage exploring opportunities to enhance the quality of life of **older Americans**.

More than a half century after Harry Truman urged Congress to adopt universal health care, **we celebrate the enactment of the Affordable Care Act**. We applaud its growing success and will fight any attempts to compromise its effectiveness or to eliminate it altogether. As for the single-payer system of health insurance that already protects senior citizens, through Medicare, and all members of Congress, through

separate legislation, we believe that it provides the fairest and most efficient allocation of our nation's health care resources.

We believe the deregulation of public utilities, the privatization of public enterprises, and the outsourcing of governmental services have frequently benefitted private interests at public expense. We oppose deregulation, privatization, and outsourcing unless it can be convincingly shown that every such proposal serves health, sustainability, and quality of life.

Our freedom and welfare rest on a bedrock of constitutional democracy and its insistence that Democratic government be based on the principles of fair and equal representation, the rule of the majority, and the right of the minority to be heard.

We oppose efforts to compromise the principle of fair and equal representation for partisan gain by gerrymandering, by the invalidation of electoral decisions through partisan impeachment proceedings, by recall elections, and by unfair voter eligibility regulations that amount to discriminatory voter suppression. We believe in universal suffrage and support the restoration of this basic right to criminals who have paid their debt to society and are no longer a threat to the public.

We support the strengthening of campaign finance reform and the total transparency of all contributions. Public financing of elections can level the playing field so that winning public office, be it federal or state, will not be limited to candidates of independent wealth or beholden to the support of corporate and other special interests.

We support a constitutional amendment that grants the citizens of the **District of Columbia home rule** and equal representation in Congress.

The present **Madison County governance** system of representation by a single board of supervisors with weighted voting confers undue power to a few individuals and denies representation to large minorities in the towns they represent. We urge reforms that will change the current system to provide for fair and equal representation throughout Madison County.

Our security and welfare in an increasingly interdependent world depend on the cooperation of the United States with all other nations that are committed to promoting international stability and the rule of law through a more effective United Nations, through the peaceful resolution of conflicts, through the protection of human rights, through the promotion of world trade and economic development, and through combatting the effects of human-induced climate change.

We believe in a **foreign policy** that protects our freedom and supports freedom and equality around the world.

We support the **United Nations charter**, which guarantees the right of individual and collective self-defense, and provides for diplomatic procedures that reduce conflict and avoid war by handling disputes through negotiations and sanctions.

We believe in a strong national defense and we urge our government to give our veterans and our courageous soldiers all the support they need.

We repudiate and consider unjustifiable the principle of unilateral preemptive **war**. We must focus attention on what motivates the hatred of those who choose to engage in acts of terror and of those who choose to lend their active or tacit support. Only by enlisting the cooperation of the entire international community, including nations that are not our allies, can we hope to identify and neutralize terrorist enemies.

The globalization of the world economy through international trade and foreign investment can benefit the advanced industrial nations as well as the developing nations. The government should not grant tax benefits and other subsidies to corporations that move American manufacturing and high-end service jobs abroad. Congress should ratify only those trade agreements that incorporate enforceable sanctions against environmental degradation and exploitation of foreign workers. Trade agreements must be accompanied by legislation that provides for the retraining and the relocation of displaced American workers and employees.

Climate Change must be addressed by all nations multilaterally. It is a destabilizing force that undermines our national and our global economy, threatens our health, and potentially leads to military conflict. Human-induced climate change, if not controlled, will affect agriculture, energy, security, and world peace. We applaud the aspirational goal to eventually limit the increase in global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, which was adopted unanimously in Paris in order to protect future generations against the potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change. We urge every level of government and the private sector to adopt energy policies that will phase out our country's major reliance on carbon and methane-emitting fossil fuels and that will greatly expand investment in renewable and non-polluting energy.

Our Home

We are proud to live and work in a county whose name honors a founding father and a remarkable first lady—James and Dolley Madison—because it is a constant reminder that America was forged in the fire of a glorious revolution to create a new order in which all men and women are “created equal” and in which legitimate rule flows from the “consent of the governed.”

If our founders could return to see the fruit of their labors—the America of today—they would find many reasons to celebrate. Seeing our continuing

divisions and inequalities, they would also admit that there is still much work to be done. But, they would encourage us not to despair because a nation that won a war of independence against the mighty British Empire and survived a brutal Civil War will always find a way to solve its problems as it continues the noble quest of its founders.