

**\* \* Poverty and Inequality:** Workers should be secure in the knowledge that honest labor will earn a wage sufficient to support their family and give their children the chance to achieve their aspirations. When work is unavailable, citizens deserve support to keep them safe and healthy to seek reemployment. We oppose the capture of economic productivity by a shrinking sector.

\* With poverty having doubled due to the recession, ensuring compassionate human services must be among the highest priorities of federal, state, and local government.

\* We support programs that reduce poverty, not just reduce the welfare rolls.

\* We must provide a safety net of social services that meets basic needs, so every member of society can attain their full potential.

\* Safe, affordable housing is a right. We support low-income housing, targeted affordable housing programs, and, where necessary, shelters as a transition to permanent housing.

\* Quality affordable childcare, education, workforce training, and substance abuse treatment must be provided to help working parents leave welfare and poor people escape poverty.

\* Taxpayer-funded social services must not be conditioned on faith-based requirements.

care system must be restructured to protect the child, and adequately funded and administered.

\* Short-term loan interest should be capped at a 36% annual percentage rate.

\* Distressed homeowners with negative equity should be eligible for modification to principal or interest rates of their mortgages.

\* Small businesses create jobs and strengthen the middle class; government policy should foster them and promote new-technology and research industries.

\* Tax cuts for the wealthy should expire, and the federal estate tax should be reinstated with protections for small, family-owned farms and businesses. Capital gains should be taxed as regular income.

\* The Earned Income Tax Credit should be maintained to help the working poor, and the Alternative Minimum Tax indexed to inflation to protect the middle class.

\* The cap on income subject to Social Security tax should be removed.

\* We support a small financial transactions tax, invisible to the average investor, which will reduce much risky and socially valueless speculation and rent-seeking.

\* Each business should pay its fair share of taxes. Each tax exemption or preference must produce a net benefit to taxpayers and appear as an expense on the state budget, meet measurable goals reported annually, and automatically expire every five years unless renewed.

**\* \* Health Care:** Health care is a basic human right. Government must provide full and equal access to high-quality, affordable care. We support a strengthened public health system that promotes conditions leading to better health for the entire population.

\* A single-payer system should be enacted statewide and nationally, to provide the most affordable comprehensive, coordinated, and effective health care, serving both individual and public health needs at a cost individuals and society can afford.

\* Health care coverage must include a strong essential benefits package ensuring effectiveness, appropriate usage and cost containment for outpatient and inpatient services; acute and long-term care; home care and hospice; mental health care and substance abuse programs; dental, vision and hearing services; family planning with

contraception and access to safe abortions; prescription drugs, medical supplies, durable medical equipment and medical technology; and rehabilitation.

\* We support government education grants and student debt forgiveness for primary care providers in exchange for service to underserved populations.

\* Our public health policy should be based on sound scientific principles and follow recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

\* We support reducing health care costs in innovative ways that improve quality of care but do not cut effective benefits or limit enrollment. We adamantly oppose attempts to privatize or ration Medicare, or to raise the age of Medicare eligibility.

\* We must expand funding of basic science and clinical research under the National Institutes of Health. Support should be based on scientific merit, not a political agenda.

\* We particularly call for ending restriction of scientifically meritorious research on the public health impacts of marijuana, gun violence, and other topics subject to politically-motivated hindrances.

\* High medical costs in the U.S. must be brought under control. The Affordable Care Act exemptions from competition for durable medical equipment and pharmaceuticals must be repealed.

\* \* **Education:** Functioning democracy requires a population with knowledge, critical thinking habits, a spirit of inquiry and good communication skills. Economic opportunity also requires education. We support high-quality universal public school from pre-K through high school, and making post-secondary education universally affordable.

\* Michigan's legislature must implement a stable source of funding of public elementary and secondary education, to include class sizes that enable optimal learning experiences, support specialists such as school nurses and counselors, English language learning, special education, and accelerated and remedial programs to meet the needs of all students.

\* Classroom instruction must be founded on comprehensive, effective curricula, including:

- a. Research-based science taught at all levels;
- b. Mathematics instruction including both arithmetic fluency and problem-solving skills, with proficiency measured according to international standards;
- c. Civics, world history and cultures as part of social studies;
- d. Opportunities to study foreign languages;
- e. Music and arts as important components of school programs;
- f. Vocational education in both middle and high school of sufficient rigor to prepare students for viable careers; and
- g. Well-funded and well-staffed school libraries.

\* We urge Michigan to stand by its adoption of the rigorous Common Core national curriculum standards.

\* Schools must be effective learning environments. School infrastructure, especially technology and safety, must be maintained and kept up to date.

\* All public education employees, including part-time faculty, should be accorded professional development and professional advancement opportunities, and must have the right to organize, engage in collective bargaining, and strike, without fear of reprisal or replacement.

\* We oppose giving public money to for-profit and sectarian charter schools.

\* Our state university system is a public asset that deserves ample funding competitive with other institutions of higher education across the nation. The rapid increases in public higher education costs should be borne primarily by public funding rather than by students and their families.

- \* Salary and benefits for part-time college instructors should be based on compensation levels for full-time professional staff, according to percentage of full-time equivalency.
- \* The overhang of student debt is a major drag on our economic recovery. We hold that current student loan debt deserves modification.
- \* We support a program that eliminates student debt in exchange for a modest percentage of income for 20 years.
- \* Much student debt was acquired to attend for-profit colleges that fail to effectively prepare students for good-paying jobs. Colleges that receive large amounts of federal money, student loans and similar funding deserve greater scrutiny, and those that do not serve their students effectively should be shut down.
- \* Schools must provide a safe environment, free from bullying and harassment, for all students, faculty and staff.
  
- \* \* **Labor:** As Michigan Democrats, we are proud of our long history of standing by labor. We support legislation to strengthen the right of workers to organize and negotiate for their wages and working conditions. Workers have the right to safe and healthy conditions enforced by strong regulatory agencies.
  
- \* Jobs must pay a living wage. This amount should be legislated based on the best data, and kept up to date.
- \* In the interim, we support the Harkin-Miller bill to set the federal minimum wage at \$10.10, thereafter indexed to inflation, and call on the state of Michigan to set a higher wage suitable for our costs of living.
- \* Workers have the right to a safe and healthy workplace.
- \* The Taft-Hartley Act and Michigan's so-called Right-To-Work law should be repealed, as should any law that seeks to interfere with freely negotiated agreements between employers and unions to collect fees or providing collectively bargained benefits to employees.
- \* U.S. employers need to recognize veterans' job skills including, but not limited to, mission-oriented determination and leadership, and they should make extra effort to find job opportunities for them.
- \* Employers who force workers to work off the clock should be prosecuted; overtime must be paid or work in excess of 8 hours a day or 40 hours a week, and must be voluntary.
- \* Equal pay for comparable work must be a bedrock principle of the labor market.
- \* All workers have the right to benefits including health care, retirement, and paid family leave.
- \* Employers must respect workers' rights of association, assembly and free speech.
- \* Employees are entitled to due process, including protection for whistleblowers and collective bargaining activities.
- \* Workers have the right not to be required by their employers to attend meetings about unionization, politics, or religion.
- \* A workplace must be free from discrimination and harassment.
- \* Workers should have the right not to be fired without cause, or for reprisal against workers locked out or on strike.
- \* Workers must be allowed to exercise collective bargaining rights without retaliation.
- \* Employees whose jobs are outsourced or otherwise eliminated should be provided job training or related services.
- \* The National Labor Relations Board must be reformed to streamline the appeals process and institute meaningful penalties for employers found to have engaged in unfair labor practices, including obstruction of union elections.
- \* Government should protect pensions and the rights of pensioners.

**\*\* Physical Infrastructure:** Our aging infrastructure needs maintenance and innovation to keep us competitive and connected. In the Upper Peninsula, our roads and broadband are vital lifelines. We call for Michigan to invest in this core governmental responsibility.

\* America's roads and bridges are aging. We score poorly on assessments of transportation maintenance. We must rectify this problem.

\* Our power, water, sewer, gas, sanitation and communications systems all suffer as well.

\* We decry the starvation of government funds, from state taxation and the Highway Trust Fund, that has led to this state of affairs.

\* Investing in maintenance is a core responsibility of state governments which should be above politics.

\* Now, when borrowing costs are low and long-term unemployment is high, is the time when Michigan and the nation should be hiring workers and purchasing the equipment to maintain and improve our infrastructure.

\* In this hiring we encourage Michigan to consider favoring the long-term unemployed who lost jobs during the economic downturn.

\* We call for an increase in the gasoline tax and its subsequent indexing to inflation, and oppose diversion of these funds to non-transportation uses.

\* We oppose short-term accounting gimmicks to pay for programs to which we should be committed permanently.

\* We support rural broadband programs that keep Upper Peninsula residents connected to the world.

\* While maintaining and improving our power grid, we encourage Michigan to cooperate with neighboring states in considering the cleanest sustainable forms of energy.

\* We support programs to help residents and businesses convert heating and small-scale power systems to lower-cost, more efficient heat and electricity.

\* We call on Michigan and the federal government to support basic research and engineering for clean power sources. America should be a technological leader in this budding field which has the potential to reshape the twenty-first century landscape.

\* Michigan's Great Lakes harbors, canals, and other waterways must be protected and maintained, and we should coordinate with regional governments to oversee this responsibility.

\* We call on Upper Peninsula governments to study the feasibility and benefits of a regional public transit service.

**\*\* Crime:** The rule of law is a prerequisite for democracy. A good government provides for the safety and security of all, with care, even-handedness, and respect for the individual.

\* Criminal justice should emphasize prevention, restorative justice and rehabilitation over incarceration alone.

\* A major cause of crime is poverty. Assessments of the costs and benefits of anti-poverty programs should include this public safety dividend.

\* Operation of prisons should not be privatized or outsourced.

\* The federal death penalty and all state death penalties should be abolished.

\* FBI funding to investigate white-collar crime should be restored, and those convicted should be sentenced commensurate with their damage to society.

\* Drug addiction is a public health problem not cured by incarceration, and should be treated as such.

- \* Asset seizures should be based on court conviction rather than arrest.
- \* Mandatory sentencing and Three Strikes laws should be ended.
- \* Governments at all levels must respect the due process which defines American justice.
- \* We particularly call for the immediate closure of the extralegal detention center at Guantanamo Bay.
- \* Effective penalties must be imposed on corporations that violate state or federal laws or regulations, and on the persons in control of those practices.
  
- \*\* **Security:** We honor those who choose to answer our country's call to military service. We owe it to those who put their lives on the line, to deploy our military judiciously.
  
- \* We insist on sufficient benefits and quality medical and mental health care for our veterans at all times.
- \* We oppose the use of contractors for military functions. Military service should be performed by men and women dedicated to service and accountable to the public, including the Uniform Code of Military Justice.
- \* All military personnel must be instructed in their rights and responsibilities under the Geneva Conventions and be subject to vigorous prosecution or violations thereof, or for other criminal conduct, including sexual assault or harassment based on gender or sexual orientation.
- \* Independent military prosecutors, rather than commanding officers, should control the investigation and prosecution of allegations of sexual assault and related misconduct.
- \* The right of conscientious objection must be guaranteed, without fear of reprisal.
- \* Breaks between overseas tours should be mandatory, as should strict time limits on each tour of duty in a combat zone and the total number of such tours.
- \* Our military personnel and veterans must be accorded the very best in medical care. Mental health treatment, mental and physical rehabilitation, and treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injuries must be fully funded.
  
- \*\* **Public Institutions:** Democracy requires full participation by an informed citizenry whose voices are not drowned out by wealth; a voting process that is fair, transparent, and open to all; and public officials who are accountable to society. America's legitimacy relies on its democratic institutions.
  
- \* The role of government is to accomplish those goals that we as citizens cannot achieve individually.
- \* Government is unique and not a business; it has very different functions and purposes. The need for its services increases during times of war, economic failure or natural disaster. To provide essential services and safety for all, government must levy fair taxes and enforce laws and regulations for the common good.
- \* Public services should not be privatized, outsourced, or moved offshore.
- \* The debt ceiling should be repealed. We have no business threatening not to pay bills that we have incurred.
- \* Congress should spend less time bickering and more time performing its duties, especially passing required appropriations bills on time and with due deliberation.
- \* We propose a universal two-year national service program to take place after high school.
- \* Public pension systems should be fully funded and the value of the individual benefit maintained with a cost of living adjustment.
- \* State taxes and other revenues must be set at a level sufficient to meet constitutional requirements and promote the general welfare.

- \* A publicly owned State Bank of Michigan should be established as the repository for state funds, to foster economic development and jobs by participating in commercial and infrastructure loans and by making direct student and farm loans.
- \* An informed citizenry and persistently inquisitive independent media are essential for democracy to flourish. We call on the Federal Communications Commission to exert its authority to reduce concentration of media ownership. Diverse speech is vital to the public discourse.
- \* The U. S. Constitution must be amended to establish that corporations shall not be considered as "persons" for purposes of political activity, and to reverse the pernicious notion that money equals speech.
- \* Investment banking must be separated from retail banking, and both subjected to tighter regulation, transparency, and accountability.
- \* The IRS should have its funding restored to more functional levels, permitting it to perform its duties.
- \* We oppose any tax amnesty for American corporations repatriating money from abroad.
- \* We urge Congress to close unproductive tax shelters and stop constructing new ones for favored constituents.
- \* We urge the Administration to pursue global agreements to end international cash shuffles for the purpose of tax avoidance.
- \* We call upon states to agree jointly to stop offering companies incentives which only move jobs from one state to another and end up starving all states of revenue.
- \* Campaign finance reform must be re-established, including contribution limits, spending limits and disclosure, as means to curtail the inordinate influence of money on the political process. Disclosure of the sources of campaign funds for or against candidates or ballot measures, by campaign committees or so-called independent political action committees, is imperative, and lobbyists should not be admitted into executive sessions of federal or state committees.
- \* Campaigns should be publicly financed through matching fund programs so that any qualified citizen may have a realistic opportunity to run for office regardless of his or her socio-economic status.
- \* The integrity of all electoral processes must be preserved. All machines used to produce, tabulate, or otherwise manage public-record election data must use open software. Mandatory auditing according to the protocols recommended by the American Statistical Association should be required for all jurisdictions.
  
- \*\* Civil Rights:** All humans have the right to food, water, shelter, safety, health care, education and jobs.
  
- \* Discrimination is wrong. Laws must ensure that prejudice does not present a barrier to obtaining education, employment, promotion, housing, insurance, or any other social or economic good. Any member of a group impacted by such a barrier must be afforded the legal means and economic opportunity – including affirmative action – to overcome such injustice.
- \* Privacy is a basic human right that government and business must recognize and respect. We assert the right of all to be free of unwarranted intrusion by government or other entities.
- \* Freedom of religion and its separation from government are fundamental to our country's existence and must be upheld at all levels. Such freedom does not, however, include a right to impose the tenets or practices of one's own faith on others.
- \* The rights of people with disabilities, including equal access to public accommodations, employment, transportation, telecommunications, voting, and government services, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act, must be monitored and enforced.

\* Net Neutrality, the right of all users and content providers to equal access to Internet service without discrimination on the basis of source, destination or content, must be preserved.

\* Cultural diversity makes our country stronger. We oppose efforts to legislate English as our official language.

\* We demand repeal of onerous voter identification requirements and deplore all tactics designed to suppress voter participation.

\* We support election of the President of the United States by popular vote, in order to accurately reflect the will of our nation's voters.

\* Marriage equality must be federally recognized.

**\*\* Environment:** We must responsibly steward the natural resources we have inherited.

Changing climate threatens catastrophic consequences to our lives and livelihoods, urgently demanding decisive action to constrain carbon emissions. Our economy must transition to sustainable power on the swiftest feasible path, and we must lead other countries to follow our example. The richness of our wild lands must be preserved: Michigan has a particular responsibility to protect the Great Lakes from challenges such as water diversion, pollution, and invasive species.

\* Global climate change is the foremost threat to survival of the earth as we know it. Government and individuals must take aggressive action now to avert further climate change. We must:

a. Require that environmental impact statements consider the full scope of every proposal, avoiding the segmentation of projects to reduce identified impacts;

b. Reduce production of greenhouse gases, including stricter emission standards for motor vehicles

c. List greenhouse gases, including CO<sub>2</sub>, as pollutants under the Clean Air Act;

d. Refuse to permit the Keystone XL Pipeline route; and

e. Oppose increasing production of fossil fuels through extreme measures such as tar sands extraction, shale oil extraction and natural gas "fracking."

\* We must establish clean, sustainable, and renewable energy sources by:

a. Supporting increased research, development and use of energy-efficient and renewable sources of power, including wind, solar, and other innovative technologies, and proposals to develop communities that demonstrate the use of such technologies;

b. Opposing new or expanded nuclear or coal-fired power plants;

c. Promoting intelligent economic incentives for energy conservation and clean energy systems, including imposition of a carbon tax and repeal of tax breaks for oil companies; and

d. Replacing technologies that contribute to environmental pollution and toxic overloads.

\* We support a carbon tax. In addition to its salutary environmental effects this tax would spur innovation in clean technology and spur the creation of good-paying jobs in this sector.

\* Neighborhoods must be affordable to people with a wide range of incomes. Among the essential public investments in neighborhoods are transit, open space, play fields, and libraries.

\* Public lands must be managed as a public trust and preserved for their environmental values as well as scenic beauty and majesty. We oppose resource exploration and development in state and national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas - places that are a critical part of our national history and heritage.

\* Where Michigan's resources are to be subject to development, the state's first duty should be to ensure the health of people and the environment in the regions affected.

\* Oversight of extraction operations should be guided by explicit thresholds for the environmental and health effects, which should be considered over the lifetime of the product.

- \* The web of life, of which we are a part, must be protected and preserved. Environmental laws and regulations must be strengthened and vigorously enforced.
  - \* Forestry is an important component of Houghton County's economy. Improving the sustainability of our forest management will ensure that this industry continues to provide jobs, mitigate climate change, and preserve our forest resources.
  - \* Biodiversity, in forestry and agriculture, keeps our natural systems strong and resilient in the face of threats.
  - \* We support legislation and education to move us toward reductions in agriculture's use of herbicides and pesticides, extensive fertilizer applications, and the overuse of antibiotics and hormones in animal husbandry.
  - \* Clear food labeling, including the presence of genetically modified ingredients, is essential for consumers to make informed choices.
  - \* We support community efforts to increase the availability of locally-produced foods. Local food production increases the resilience of our food supply and preserves farmland and agricultural employment.
  - \* Great Lakes water should not be removed from its watershed.
  - \* Transportation planning should support non-motorized options such as bicycle and pedestrian paths.
  - \* Climate change, health effects, and environmental impacts including water and air pollution must be considered in transportation planning decisions.
  - \* Pharmaceutical manufacturers should be required to offer safe, no-cost disposal of unused or unsafe prescription drugs.
  - \* We should engage in responsible waste management and encourage this among residents and businesses, include reducing, reusing, and recycling as much material as possible.
  - \* Governments at all levels should create viable markets for reusable and recycled materials.
  - \* Manufacturers should be held financially responsible for cleanup and disposal of products at the end of their useful lives.
  - \* We should reinstitute the Superfund Tax to make polluters pay for despoiling the environment
  - \* We must apply stringent environmental safeguards on the export of toxic waste.
  - \* Here in Houghton County, planners should always keep sight of the contribution that our clean air and pristine wild lands make to our economy year-round, such as through tourism, outdoor recreation, and relocating residents.
- \*\* Immigration and Foreign Policy:** We welcome immigrants who wish to become part of our economy and democracy. In dealing with foreign countries, we must have an effective, comprehensive plan to ensure our security while protecting our constitutional rights and the human rights of all.
- \* We support comprehensive immigration reform, providing for greater legal immigration and options for undocumented immigrants to normalize their status. Immigration policy must recognize the basic human rights of immigrants and accord them due process in all proceedings.
  - \* The U. S. must provide for fair and humane treatment of immigrants, reuniting families and crafting a fair path to legal status and eventual citizenship for those already living here.
  - \* Undocumented immigrant students who arrived in the United States as children, graduated from U.S. high schools and have no criminal record, and have been in this country continuously for at least five years, should be given an opportunity to earn permanent residency and access to higher education.

- \* We support continuing effective border control measures, consistent with individual liberties, while encouraging lawful immigration by eliminating ethnic bias in quotas and speeding timely processing of applications for entry, asylum, temporary work permits, and lawful permanent residence ("green cards").
- \* We must demonstrate our commitment to peace, never initiating unprovoked war. We should resolve international conflicts through diplomacy and international institutions.
- \* Terrorism is a global issue. We must work with other nations to eliminate terrorist networks.
- \* We must complete a timely withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Afghanistan in such a way as to do the least harm to the peoples of the region and to promote stability.
- \* We support rebuilding war-torn countries through international cooperation, using local labor. We have a special duty to assist with rebuilding both Iraq and Afghanistan and to provide humanitarian relief for their people.
- \* The United States should support programs that promote human rights, adherence to international law, democratic elections, environmental protection, health and safety, peace, commerce, and cultural understanding.
- \* We must lead international efforts to prevent genocide.
- \* America should sign and ratify the U.N. agreement forming an International Criminal Court.
- \* We must honor the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- \* As a prosperous democracy, the United States should provide our fair share of effective foreign aid to reduce world poverty and improve health, education, and access to safe water and food. This includes restoring support of family planning worldwide.
- \* Existing international trade agreements should be renegotiated to incorporate, and future trade agreements should incorporate: human rights, labor rights, consumer protections, worker safety, and environmental protections with transparency and democratic procedures at all levels. Secret WTO processes should be public.