

**PLATFORM OF THE
WESTCHESTER COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE**

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PREAMBLE

The Westchester County Democratic Committee (“WCDC”) is dedicated to principles and policies designed to improve the lives of our residents. We believe government has a role in creating a free and equal society where everyone can enjoy the promises made in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

The WCDC believes government at all levels should adopt laws and enact policies that recognize the worth of every individual and eliminate structural inequality. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt recognized this when, advocating for a Second Bill of Rights, he said in his 1944 State of the Union address: “we have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence.”

To achieve this we must:

Ensure that every citizen has access to the ballot both to express their opinion and to hold elected officials accountable.

Guarantee that all, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, religious practice, gender, ability status, sexual orientation or national origin, enjoy the civil liberties at the core of our Constitution.

Strive to make it possible for everyone to have a job at a wage that provides families with adequate food, clothing and shelter.

Ensure that every child receives a quality education regardless of geographical location or personal wealth.

Provide for universal quality, affordable medical care and provide protection for all in their old age from the devastation of sickness and accident.

Ensure that enforcement and the legal system treat every resident fairly.

Endeavor to see that everyone has a safe home in an environment free from the threat of contamination and climate crisis.

With these as guiding beliefs and values, the Westchester County Democratic Committee commits to supporting policies and candidates dedicated to the following:

- Protecting voting rights
- Preserving civil and human rights
- Building a stronger, fairer economy

- Providing a world class education in every zip code
- Achieving universal, affordable, quality health care
- Developing trust in the criminal justice system
- Combating climate and environmental crisis

The policy goals outlined in this platform are aspirational. They represent the overall vision of the Westchester County Democratic Committee and the values, principles and ideals shared by Democrats across the county and across the country. The specific legislation and policies necessary to achieve these goals will vary from candidate to candidate and from one elected office to another. This framework is intended to be used to facilitate important conversations with candidates rather than as a strict set of criteria for candidate selection.

PROTECTING VOTING RIGHTS

Nothing is more fundamental to democracy than voting. The ability of all citizens to elect their leaders is the very definition of the democratic system. The Democratic party, therefore, stands squarely behind the main underpinning of a vital democracy: free, fair and unimpeded access to the ballot.

- **Voting Rights**

The WCDC supports the expansion and protection of Voting Rights. To this end, the WCDC supports restoring in full the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

The WCDC supports automatic voter registration with an opt-out option.

The WCDC supports repeal of the state constitutional prohibition on same-day voter registration.

The WCDC supports universally available mail-in voting and early voting.

The WCDC supports campaign finance reforms, including disclosure of donations by super PACs, LLC's, and "dark money" 501(c)4 groups, the establishment of a public funding match for small-dollar donations in state-wide and county-wide elections and the institution of disclosure requirements for spending on social media ads.

The WCDC supports investment to help local governments upgrade election technology, which must provide durable, verifiable paper ballots.

The WCDC supports court discretion to direct manual vote audits before certification of an election-

The WCDC supports the establishment of a secondary school voter registration access program.

The WCDC supports the implementation of ranked-choice voting.

PRESERVING CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In 1958 Eleanor Roosevelt, speaking of The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, said *“these laws must address the world of the individual person; the neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”* The Westchester Democratic Committee supports local efforts toward reaching these goals.

● Civil Rights

The WCDC supports ending discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, religious practice, language, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or ability status.

The WCDC supports adequate funding and design of data collection and analysis in order to better design policies that address the needs of the most vulnerable communities.

The WCDC supports the protection of individual privacy through prosecution of the illegal collection and use of personal data.

The WCDC supports the protection of digital privacy and the consumer’s right to privacy by allowing residents to opt IN to the targeting and sale of their data rather than opting out.

The WCDC supports honest representation by elected officials and rejects bribery, “pay-to-play,” nepotism, cronyism or any form of corruption by officials.

● Women’s Rights

The WCDC supports passage and ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment by New York State.

The WCDC supports legislation and policies to end sexual assault, domestic abuse, and other violence against women.

The WCDC supports the rights of all people, including women, to make personal health care decisions and condemns acts of violence, harassment, and intimidation of reproductive health providers, patients, and staff.

- **LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS**

(Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer or Questioning, Intersexual, Asexual - plus)

The WCDC supports enactment of legislation to outlaw discrimination against LGBTQIA+ people in housing, public accommodations, employment, access to credit, education, jury service, and federal programs.

The WCDC supports equal access for LGBTQIA+ people to adoption or foster-care services.

The WCDC supports the protection of LGBTQIA+ children from bullying and assault.

The WCDC supports access to federally funded support programs for LGBTQIA+ youth and older adults.

- **Accessibility Rights**

The WCDC supports efforts to maintain and enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Fair Housing Act, the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act and the Help American Vote Act.

- **Immigrant Rights**

The WCDC supports policies and programs that encourage immigrants and their families to become citizens.

The WCDC supports continuation of the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program until comprehensive immigration legislation is adopted.

The WCDC supports access to legal representation for immigrants.

- **Indigenous Tribal Nations Rights**

The WCDC supports honoring, upholding, and strengthening the United States' trust obligations to the Tribal Nations and communities.

BUILDING A STRONGER, FAIRER ECONOMY

Income and wealth inequality in America are intensifying. New York is among the states with the greatest income disparity in the country and Westchester is among the counties with the greatest income disparity in the state. It is one of the most critical challenges to overcome.

- **Minimum Wage/ Living Wage**

The Westchester County Democratic Committee supports the state's \$15 minimum wage. We also support a minimum wage indexed to inflation, as Social Security is. As this "minimum" wage is not sufficient for working families in Westchester County, we support policies that can achieve and maintain a "living" wage.

- **Employment**

The WCDC supports the concept of "full employment" and to that end, favors creating jobs that respond to evolving societal needs. As advances in technology and other factors alter the workplace, jobs and job training must evolve to mirror these new needs. Special attention should be given to creating jobs in "clean" and "future-based" sectors.

- **Pay Equality**

The WCDC backs elimination of racial and gender wage gaps. Private and public sectors need measurable goals for recruiting and promoting BIPOC, women, LGBTQIA+, people with disabilities and veterans.

- **Child Care**

The WCDC supports reliable, affordable child care

The WCDC supports at least 6-weeks of family leave for parents and guardians.

- **Eradicating Homelessness and Promoting Housing Stability**

Homelessness in our communities needs our full attention. We fully support the many community stake holders such as nonprofit organizations and houses of worship that work alongside local and county government to address this problem. However, greater action at the federal and state levels is also needed to increase affordable housing stock for low and very-low income individuals and families as well as provide programs to restore and rehabilitate current housing units. Housing should be stable, accessible, safe, healthy, energy efficient, and affordable.

The WCDC supports policies and potential legislation that will diversify and create new opportunities for affordable housing at various income levels for renters and prospective homeowners. Local governments should take aggressive steps to increase affordable housing. Zoning laws should be reviewed and affordable housing ordinances should be adopted to allow for building affordable housing. Furthermore, local elected officials should be made aware of and encouraged to attend educational programs on affordable housing.

- **Worker Rights**

The WCDC supports labor unions in their efforts to increase wages and job conditions and benefits for public and private workers in the county.

Together with our union allies, we support the right of workers to paid family leave and sick leave and support expansion of the Earned Sick Leave Law and Safe Time Leave Law.

In addition, the WCDC supports measures to enable workers to save at work for emergencies and for retirement.

- **More Equitable Tax Code**

The WCDC encourages reform of the tax code to be more progressive and equitable. We support the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit and other provisions that help working families build wealth.

The WCDC also supports revising the tax code to ensure the wealthy pay a more equitable share of the overall tax burden.

The WCDC supports raising revenue from sources other than a regressive sales tax.

PROVIDING A WORLD CLASS EDUCATION IN EVERY ZIP CODE

As we enter the third decade of the 21st century it should be evident that equitable public education at every level is necessary for the success of every child in reaching their full potential and for the well-being of American society.

To achieve these goals the Westchester County Democratic Committee advocates for more of public education to meet new challenges and demands. Every school must be accountable for providing equitable education, and 21st century technology must be made available to every student in Westchester County.

- **Early Childhood**

The WCDC supports universal, free, year-long early childhood education.

- **Funding**

The WCDC seeks and supports a fair and equitable alternative to property taxes for the full funding of public schools.

The WCDC supports granting Westchester County high school graduates free tuition and fees for two years at community college or two years of public vocational training.

- **Geographical Inclusivity**

The WCDC believes all K-12 public education classes, including those in charter schools, should reflect the entire population of the area from which the students are enrolled or recruited.

- **Technology**

Just as during the 20th Century, books were provided without cost to public school students, now in the 21st Century technology such as computers and Wi-Fi connectivity should be available without cost to the students.

- **Curriculum**

The WCDC believes selection of educational curriculum and support materials such as books and films should be made by educational professionals, in conjunction with parents through their school boards and should follow the New York State Board of Regents guidelines of diversity, equity and inclusivity.

ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL, AFFORDABLE, QUALITY HEALTH CARE

Health care is a human right. Providing healthcare to all Americans has long been a goal of the Democratic party. The Westchester County Democratic Committee supports rights that include: equal access to affordable, quality and accessible physical and mental healthcare; affordable prescription drugs; and affordable long term care for all.

- **Universal Healthcare**

The WCDC supports the enactment of the New York Health Act until Universal Healthcare provided by Congress is as good or better.

The WCDC supports the expansion of Medicare to lower ages and the reinstatement of the original provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The WCDC supports policies that protect the health care rights and needs of the BIPOC population, women and the LGBTQIA+ community.

- **Drug Prices**

The WCDC supports the reduction in the cost of drugs in New York until Congress provides lower prescription drug costs as part of Universal Healthcare.

- **Medicaid**

The WCDC supports the State paying for county Medicaid costs

- **Local Municipalities Health Insurance**

The WCDC supports quality, affordable healthcare for all public employees and retirees.

- **Mental Health, Substance Use, Gambling and other Addictions**

The WCDC supports the county's rapid and effective distribution of federal funds for Mental Health and Substance Use Treatment. The WCDC also supports services for the homeless and local Mental Health Clinics.

The WCDC supports the expansion of mental health programs and services for young people in schools and through community outreach organizations.

- **Reproductive Health, Rights and Justice**

The WCDC supports a woman's right to choose and we support legislation that provides unimpeded access to local women's health care providers.

- **Health- Care Workforce**

The WCDC supports meeting the needs of the Healthcare Workforce.

- **Long-Term Care**

To meet the needs of the increasing population of older people and people suffering from age-related illnesses, the WCDC supports funding to train and support Home Health Aides and Aging- In- Place workers at the proper staff/patient ratio.

- **Geographic Health**

The WCDC supports the equal and effective distribution of health care facilities in local communities throughout the county.

- **Veterans**

The WCDC supports policies that maintain the mental and physical health of Westchester's veterans. This includes access to diagnosis and treatment in a timely manner at federal government expense.

- **Public Health**

The WCDC supports science-based health requirements designed to protect the public health.

INCREASING TRUST IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The United States has the highest prison population per capita in the world. For a nation that aspires to be the greatest democracy, and the land of opportunity, this stain on our society must be addressed.

We need to build a more just society, we must decriminalize drugs, and provide enhanced services to our prison population so that a prison term, however short, does not lead to permanently broken lives, broken families, and a life sentence of ruin after prison. The Westchester County Democratic Committee believes in a criminal justice system that will heal our society, rebuild our communities, and create empathy between victims and victimizers.

- **Juvenile Justice**

The WCDC supports a complete examination and review of our juvenile justice system. To that end, we will need to create multiple pathways for young people returning to their communities to successfully re-enter civil life, and their schools. This means providing them with social services, and educational support, that will allow them to fulfill their potential.

- **Police Reform**

The WCDC supports the ongoing efforts at police reform and implementation of recommendations by each municipality.

The WCDC supports the establishment of an independent office that investigates alleged misconduct by police officers. This independent body, appointed for their subject matter expertise and judicial knowledge, should have subpoena power to properly execute its duties.

The WCDC supports the NYC Bar Association who has called on the state to “create a modern, fair and transparent system for investigating and disciplining officers accused of misconduct.”

- **Bail and court reform**

The WCDC supports legislation and policies that recognize that the court system has had a disproportionately negative impact on BIPOC and poor communities. To this end, the WCDC supports reform of the bail system which has historically hurt the poor.

The WCDC also supports additional funding and training for court systems, especially in small towns and villages.

- **Ending the epidemic of gun violence**

The WCDC supports a comprehensive update of federal and state laws to require background checks on all gun sales, regardless of the distribution mechanism for gun sales, to keep our communities safe.

The WCDC supports transparency concerning crimes committed with guns.

The WCDC supports fully funding community-based programs to address the social issues that contribute to gun violence.

The WCDC supports immediate steps to reduce the flow of weapons to our streets. These include holding gun manufacturers legally liable for their products; banning the manufacture and sale of assault weapons; providing funding to buy back weapons in our communities; and forcing requiring federal registration of existing assault weapons.

Elected officials should consider establishing a new National Commission on School Safety so that experts can research and develop a comprehensive, federal-level plan for protecting our children, and develop state and local models that are replicable and more easily implemented with Federal and State funding.

The WCDC supports a ban on “ghost guns”

COMBATING CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Westchester County is an extraordinary place to live and work. The natural beauty in our county is iconic, precious, but in danger. From the banks of the Hudson River to the shores of the Long Island Sound, our county is filled with lakes, streams, rivers, meadows, and forests. Our biodiversity is rich, yet threatened by climate change and overdevelopment. Everyone who lives in Westchester has the right to clean air and water, sustainable infrastructure, and a life free from exposure to toxic chemicals, pollution, or the threat of exposure to nuclear waste.

- **Clean air and water**

Investment in clean water infrastructure remains a top priority to ensure our drinking water is safe and healthy. The WCDC urgently supports funding the modernization of sewage treatment centers so we do not pollute our rivers or the Long Island Sound.

- **Infrastructure**

The WCDC supports measures to modernize the county infrastructure, roads and bridges, in a sustainable fashion that increases its resilience and improves our economic competitiveness.

The WCDC supports measures to enhance climate resiliency, including but not limited to flood mitigation infrastructure and public disaster preparedness education.

- **Transportation**

The WCDC supports the expansion and improvement of mass transit offerings – passenger and freight rail, buses, bus rapid transit and light rail.

- **Buildings**

The WCDC supports the structural repairs to update public buildings, including schools, and make them more energy efficient, retrofitting them with new, green power sources.

- **Electrical Utilities**

The WCDC supports close supervision of the electrical utilities by regulatory agencies to insure that their infrastructure is resilient and their plans to restore power in an emergency are current and backed by sufficient staffing.

- **Open Spaces**

The WCDC supports a plan to purchase and sustainably maintain additional open spaces in the county. Trails, playing fields, swimming pools and other recreational facilities should be upgraded to meet new safety and accessibility standards.

- **Indian Point**

The WCDC supports proper supervision of the decommissioning of Indian Point and its replacement with sustainable energy generation that uses state-of-the-art safety precautions and is located a safe distance from densely populated areas.

- **Carbon Footprint**

The WCDC believes all levels of government should confront the climate crisis by acting to reduce both public and private greenhouse gas emissions. The county should collaborate with local governments to drastically reduce the carbon footprint of their own operations, including changing their vehicle fleets and equipment to electric power, greening public buildings, planting trees on publicly owned land, advancing the transition to energy from sustainable sources for both government and private use. The WCDC also supports New York's goal of a zero emissions electricity sector by 2040 and an overall carbon neutral economy.

- **Carbon Tax**

The WCDC supports adoption of a New York State Carbon Tax with revenue dedicated to county investments in building a green infrastructure.