



**ArkDems**

2020 - 2022

Platform of the

Democratic

Party of

Arkansas

## **Preamble**

At its best, America exists as a beacon to the world. Our Constitution safeguards individual liberties, establishes a vibrant democracy, and provides the foundations for a secure country that promotes the well-being of all Americans. Arkansas Democrats share these fundamental American principles and promote individual freedom, equality of opportunity, community empowerment, and democracy. All are essential if Arkansas is to reach its full potential.

The Democratic Party is committed to equality of opportunity and removing legal barriers that treat individuals unfairly based upon their identities. Regardless of where you grew up, what race or gender you are, who you love, or what you believe, we are all Arkansans and Americans who should be treated fairly in our state and country.

Democrats will enact policies that offer excellent and affordable education to all, provide every Arkansan with access to high-quality health care, and ensure access to affordable housing. Only with these basic rights will we see all Arkansans able to flourish in our state.

Arkansans have a responsibility to participate fully in their democracy in the voting booth and through using their constitutionally-protected freedoms of speech and association to make their views on issues known to their fellow citizens and elected officials. Government has a responsibility to serve the people of the state in an ethical, responsible manner through using their tax dollars wisely, valuing the input of all citizens, respecting citizens' civil liberties, and operating ethically. This combination of an engaged citizenry and a decent and dignified government will ensure the promotion of the common good.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas respects the diversity of opinions in our party. While recognizing that there are some who may disagree on specific issues as stated within this platform, we recommend the following guided by these principles and goals.

## **Arkansas Democrats Believe in American Democracy**

Arkansas Democrats will protect our democracy and demand the highest ethical standards in government. We believe in transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Democracy depends on an informed citizenry, and Democrats will enact policies to promote robust independent and objective journalism.

### **Arkansas Democrats will protect your right to vote.**

One of America's most important rights is the vote. Generations of Arkansans fought to expand this most basic right of our democracy. Arkansas Democrats will make voting even more accessible to our citizens. Democrats support automatic and universal voter registration, voting by mail, making Election Day a state holiday, placing voting centers on college campuses, in diverse communities, and in rural areas, and other measures that increase turnout and strengthen our democracy in our state and in our country.

The Democratic Party opposes intrusive Arkansas voter identification laws. Supported by no evidence or facts, such efforts needlessly and egregiously disenfranchise Arkansans, including veterans, people of color, the poor, the elderly, and students. Such laws impose unreasonable limitations on the right to vote, limitations that have an unjustifiable discriminatory impact.

We oppose any other legislation that makes it harder to vote. This includes opposing the closure of polling precincts, any budget reductions to election administration, and changes that make absentee voting more difficult for the most vulnerable Arkansans.

Arkansas Democrats will enact campaign finance reform.

We call for an end to the campaign finance system currently at work that causes so many Arkansans to doubt the health of our democracy. In the wake of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*, campaign finance reform is urgently needed.

Arkansas Democrats led efforts to make our elections more accountable to the people by passing a constitutional amendment prohibiting corporations from making campaign contributions. We believe corporations should be prohibited from spending on political campaigns at any level. Arkansas Democrats will continue to develop and support transparency laws that will let Arkansans know the forces behind attempts to buy our elections. We are committed to further action to ensure that elections are funded in a fair and equitable way.

Arkansas Democrats will end partisan gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering undermines our democracy, divides our communities, and decreases the ability of legislators to compromise to produce positive legislation. Democrats support creating an independent redistricting commission that will draw fair districts that do not unnecessarily divide our communities.

Arkansas Democrats will protect the People's right to petition to make their own laws.

Regnat Populus ("the People Rule") is Arkansas's official motto. A critical part of ensuring that motto is reflected in reality is the ballot initiative process. Arkansans collect signatures from their neighbors and submit laws for the entire state to vote on without having to go through politicians or parties. However, in recent years this sacred petition right has been attacked by special interests and Republican politicians. Arkansas Democrats will enact measures to protect the initiative process and make it easier for citizens to place proposals like a minimum wage increase on the ballot.

Arkansas Democrats will ensure that all Americans have a meaningful vote in electing the President.

Democrats believe each person's vote should be equal in all elections. All Arkansans deserve to have their voices heard, and Arkansas Democrats support a national popular vote to elect our president. This will increase the influence of Arkansans when electing the President and Vice President of the United States.

## **Arkansas Democrats Believe in Affordable, Accessible Health Care**

The Democratic Party is dedicated to guaranteeing health care for all Arkansans. We are dedicated to bringing down the costs for families and businesses while also improving the quality of health care in our state.

### **Arkansas Democrats will defend Medicaid expansion.**

Arkansas Democrats led the way in expanding Medicaid in our state. This version of Medicaid expansion saves lives and provides over a quarter million Arkansans with access to health insurance. Medicaid expansion has strengthened our hospitals, especially in rural areas, ensuring that more Arkansans have access to health care. In addition to saving rural hospitals, this innovation continues to lower health care costs, save jobs, keep health centers open, encourage competition in the insurance marketplace, and prevent a tax increase on Arkansas business.

### **Arkansas Democrats will improve upon the success of the Affordable Care Act.**

Democrats believe health care must be affordable and accessible to all Arkansans. Working families must be able to continue to receive health insurance when they change jobs or when someone in their family gets sick. Democrats will continue to fight to ensure health coverage for those with pre-existing conditions. We will expand health coverage for those without access to high quality, affordable health care. We will encourage and assist small businesses to offer health insurance to their workers at a reasonable price. Democrats support making Medicare and Medicaid available to all Arkansans. Any citizen who would like to avoid the struggles and chaos of private insurance should have the right to access Medicare or Medicaid coverage. This Public Option will provide Arkansans with all medical, dental, and nursing care.

As a record number of Arkansans have health insurance, many still struggle to afford the prescription drugs necessary to live a meaningful life. While Arkansans struggle to pay for life-saving medications, the pharmaceutical industry continues to enjoy record profits. The Democratic Party pledges to pass legislation to make prescription drugs more affordable for everyone.

The Democratic Party supports programs to expand and improve health care in rural and underserved areas. We must ensure that the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences is a world leader in delivering health care and in research. In addition, we will promote the availability of healthy food and the elimination of food deserts.

The Democratic Party supports programs that recognize the right of Arkansans with disabilities to obtain health care that allows them to be as integrated as possible into their communities and jobs. Arkansas must enact the Community First Choice Option, which will provide people with disabilities greater access to being served in their communities and reduce the waitlist for such services.

Arkansas Democrats see mental health and substance abuse treatment programs as essential.

Democrats believe we must treat mental health issues with the same care and seriousness that we treat issues of physical health. We will work with health professionals to support a robust mental health workforce and ensure that all Arkansans have access to mental health care. Democrats are leading the effort to expand community-based treatment for substance abuse disorders and mental health conditions. Treating mental illness and intervening early also improves economic outcomes for individuals and the entire state.

We must confront the epidemic of drug and alcohol addiction, specifically the opioid crisis, by expanding access to prevention and treatment, supporting recovery, and helping community organizations. Democrats will assist those struggling with addiction to find and sustain healthy lives by encouraging full recovery and integration into society and removing barriers to employment, housing, and education. We will expand access to care for addiction services and provide insurance coverage equal to that for any other health condition. We will provide Arkansans with excellent substance use treatment programs in their own communities.

Awareness and early intervention are key to reducing the prevalence of mental illness and ensuring the best outcomes. Democrats will provide people with mental health therapy, psychiatric services, and programs that help keep people out of facilities and living in their own communities. We will improve coordination between the judicial system and substance use treatment systems to ensure best outcomes. We will make sure Arkansans have access to well-trained professionals who understand the culture and values of the people they are serving.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that Arkansans have the opportunity to access high quality, affordable, and confidential health care, regardless of their location or economic status and without requiring guardian, judicial, parental, or spousal consent or notification.

Arkansas Democrats will fight for family-friendly leave policies.

We support the creation of paid leave programs to help Arkansas families. The Democratic Party believes workers should not have to leave a seriously ill family member or a newborn baby behind because they cannot afford to miss a paycheck. Paid parental leave is linked to lower infant mortality rates and better health for both infants and mothers. Family-friendly policies, such as paid annual, sick, and parental leave, result in economic benefits to employers, including improved recruitment, retention, and morale of employees. Providing paid family leave will make Arkansas a more attractive place to work and raise a family.

Our party supports providing pregnant workers with a right to reasonable accommodations. Although many women can continue working safely throughout their pregnancies without the need for any modification to their jobs, some women find that at some point during pregnancy particular job activities, such as lifting, bending, or standing for long periods, may begin to pose a challenge. Many women could continue to work without risk to themselves or their pregnancies

with slight job modifications. Without accommodations, women may face an impossible choice between the health of their pregnancies and their jobs. We believe that no woman should have to choose between the health of her pregnancy and her paycheck.

### **Arkansas Democrats Believe Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic Must Be a Top Priority**

We know the Trump Administration's failure in responding to the global pandemic persists and places excessive responsibilities on states and localities. Until this changes, we must be sure that Arkansas continues to be guided by science in rolling out the most advanced testing and contact tracing methods to keep COVID-19 under control in our state.

#### **Arkansas Democrats will fight to continue to improve testing and contact tracing.**

With science as our guide, we will continue to expand and speed COVID-19 testing so that we can more quickly identify those with the virus and similarly employ cutting edge methods to test those with whom they have come in contact.

#### **Arkansas Democrats will ensure that all Arkansans gain access to an effective vaccine when it becomes available.**

When a reliable vaccine for COVID-19 becomes available, we will work to ensure that the Arkansas public is educated about its availability and the proper infrastructure is created to deliver the vaccine as quickly as possible. As has been shown in the patterns of those who have become infected and have succumbed to COVID-19, we know that disparities exist in who typically gains access to health care. We must fight to ensure that our Black and Brown residents, those for whom English is not their first language, and those living in rural parts of our state gain equitable access to a vaccine that will allow us to return to our way of life and aid our economic recovery.

#### **Arkansas Democrats will tackle the long-term effects of COVID-19.**

We are just beginning to understand the long-term impact of the coronavirus on those who have had the disease but have thankfully survived. Arkansas Democrats will fight to be certain that these Arkansans receive the care they need to recover as fully as possible from the impact of the virus on their bodies. As we know that there were significant racial and ethnic disparities in the victims of COVID-19, we must be certain that all who have lingering effects of the virus must gain the treatments they need to return to full lives and livelihoods as soon as possible.

### **Arkansas Democrats Believe in Quality Education for All**

Democrats are committed to making Arkansas a knowledge and educational hub for the 21st Century. The future of Arkansas demands that we hold education as our most important civic and economic development initiative. A world-class educational system—one that moves seamlessly from early childhood through adulthood—will make our democracy stronger and help develop jobs to make Arkansas competitive with other states and the world.

Arkansas Democrats will create universally accessible, high-quality pre-kindergarten.

Students must have the opportunity to begin their education early, laying the foundation for a better-educated citizenry and workforce. Democrats believe quality pre-kindergarten has a positive ripple effect throughout our education system and the life of any single student. We are committed to making sure no four-year old will ever be placed on a waiting list for pre-K.

Arkansas Democrats will renew Arkansas's commitment to our public schools.

We believe Arkansans are best served when our public schools are strong and equitable. Arkansas Democrats will make sure that our public schools have the resources they need and are funded to be the best in the country. We believe in funding strategies that ensure equity across communities.

We believe public funds should be used only for public schools. Democrats oppose the use of vouchers, as vouchers undermine public education. Democrats believe charter schools must ensure equal access to all students and must not engage in any practices that limit access to students of diverse or low-income backgrounds. Charter schools must be used on a limited basis and held to the same standards of accountability as traditional public schools.

The availability of high-quality teaching and the latest in education technology must be available to students in all parts of the state. Arkansas Democrats will bring high-speed broadband to all Arkansas students, especially in rural areas, and will work to eliminate digital inequities that exist in both urban and rural Arkansas and have been amplified by the current pandemic when virtual options have created pathways for continued learning.

Democrats are leading efforts to establish statewide best practices for students with disabilities. The Democratic Party is committed to providing high-quality special education and ensuring that students with disabilities have the skills necessary to transition into the working world.

Democrats are committed to creating and maintaining a safe and welcoming school environment free of bullying. The Party believes our education system must ensure respect and order in schools by implementing restorative discipline.

Arkansas Democrats will raise teacher salaries and provide the resources they need to teach students.

The success of our educational system hinges on our teachers. Teachers work hard to fulfill the sacred and vital role of helping our children learn skills and values needed to become effective citizens. In particular, we recognize teachers for shouldering the burden resulting from the pandemic.

As we demand quality instruction and work hard to retain talented classroom teachers, we must continue to recruit the best and brightest to the teaching profession, raise teacher pay, and protect teacher benefits. We support removing unduly burdensome, bureaucratic reporting requirements

so our teachers can spend more time focusing on improving teaching and the classroom. We recognize teachers need to be evaluated fairly and held accountable, and we support giving educators the support and professional development they need to be successful.

We must invest in those who are willing to take on the task of educating our next generation. In the short term, we support teaching in Arkansas's highest-need locations or highest-need subjects being incentivized with higher wages. Over time, we need to raise salaries so that teachers are paid at the same rates as doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. ensure the teaching profession provides more competitive wages that are commensurate with the importance of the job and the talent needed to do it well. Additionally, we support that teachers should be provided with quality affordable health care options. The Democratic Party also recognizes the vital role education support professionals play in educating our children, and we must provide salaries and make sure benefits are available that recognize their worth.

#### Arkansas Democrats will invest in wrap-around supports for our students.

Parental involvement is crucial for an individual child's success in school. We will empower parents with the tools they need to be active, respected participants in the education of their children.

Democrats support afterschool and summer programs that reinforce learning, keep our young people safe, and aid working families in the care of their children.

It is crucial that students come to school healthy and ready to learn. Food insecurity has a negative impact on students' health, well-being, and success in school. Democrats support comprehensive school nutrition programs. We will implement an integrated school health system so that health coverage of our youth can be increased. It is crucial that every student in the state have consistent access to mental health professionals and a trained nurse in their school.

Arkansas Democrats support accessibility of public school students to comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education, including information to help stem the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and prevent teen pregnancy.

#### Arkansas Democrats will make post-high school opportunities accessible for all.

Arkansans must have access to post-high school opportunities, whether college, career-technical training, or community college. Every student who wants to attend college or participate in post-high school training opportunities should be able to do so regardless of economic status. Democrats will maintain and expand scholarship programs that provide students with opportunities to pursue college and careers after high school and encourage talented Arkansans to make their living in Arkansas.

Democrats believe a serious commitment to higher education requires funding from the state. By adequately and equitably funding our universities and community colleges, we drive down tuition costs, increase access for all students, and strengthen Arkansas's workforce.

Democrats believe that students should not incur massive debt to obtain post-high school training or education. We are committed to student debt relief and tuition cost control. Students should have the ability to refinance their student loans, and students who dedicate their working lives to public service should have their debt forgiven.

The Democratic Party supports Arkansas DREAMers. It is wrong for young people, who have the right to live, study, and work in our state, to be denied opportunities simply because of their legal status. Democrats are supportive of pro-DACA legislation, such as expanding in-state tuition and professional licenses.

#### Arkansas Democrats will support literacy programs and libraries.

Adult literacy services and instruction on other skills are provided by a network of county-level literacy councils and libraries. Whether developing skills to succeed in school, looking for a job, exploring new careers, having a baby, or planning retirement, our citizens turn to libraries to help them lead better lives. Democrats support libraries and programs for adult literacy, education, and life skills.

#### **Arkansas Democrats Believe in a Strong and Just Economy**

Productive employment is the cornerstone of the Arkansas economy. Democrats have always lowered unemployment while in office (Republican politicians have always increased unemployment). Arkansas Democrats honor the hard work of workers and responsible actions of businesses, especially small businesses, that together create jobs and grow our economy. Key to a vibrant economy is a healthy, educated, empowered, and financially-secure workforce. The Democratic Party is committed to policies that promote and reward responsible business growth and benefit workers and their families with good-paying jobs.

#### Arkansas Democrats will raise Arkansans' salaries and fight against income inequality.

Severe economic inequality is hurting Arkansas families. The Democratic Party successfully led efforts to raise the minimum wage in 2014 and 2018. We believe it is time to raise the minimum wage to a living wage and tie raises to inflation.

Arkansans deserve fair taxes. The tax code created by Republican politicians is rigged to rob the middle class and working families and gives your hard-earned dollars to the already rich. Arkansas Democrats will pass tax reform that is fair to all Arkansans, working families, and puts more money in the pockets of middle and working class Arkansans while protecting essential state services such as education, Medicaid, and public safety. Democrats will create an Earned Income Tax Credit. Democrats will enact an inheritance tax on the very richest individuals instead of giving the children of the already rich an unfair advantage.

### Arkansas Democrats will promote and protect workplace democracy.

We support the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. Democrats will protect workers from being fired without just cause. We will pass laws to place Arkansas workers on the board of Arkansas companies. We will enact measures to guarantee that profits are shared with workers.

Democrats call for an end to discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, socioeconomic status, and disability in employment and business. Arkansas Democrats will not tolerate sexual harassment in the workplace. Democrats will increase business opportunities for women, diverse communities, and veterans. Women have the right to the same pay as men when performing comparable work, and Democrats support equal pay for equal work.

### Arkansas Democrats will end corporate welfare.

We oppose laws implemented by Republican politicians that take your hard-earned dollars and give them to the richest corporations. We oppose rewarding companies that ship American jobs overseas with special tax breaks and loopholes. We encourage companies to create jobs in Arkansas and support policies that promote job growth in Arkansas and American-made products. Moreover, on state-funded building projects, an advantage should be given to contractors who commit to hire Arkansas workers.

### Arkansas Democrats will provide economic opportunities for all regions of our state.

Each region of our great state should benefit in Arkansas's economy. We will fight to provide economic opportunities for all regions of our state, especially those areas of Arkansas that are economically depressed.

Democrats will create innovative programs to provide opportunities for good-paying jobs to Arkansans. We support programs that will keep young Arkansans in our state and attract young people from around the country to make their homes in the Natural State. Democrats will create tax incentives for millennials and Generation Zers to choose Arkansas and provide stipends and low-interest loans for young people starting businesses and creating jobs in Arkansas.

Democrats will improve and expand broadband across every corner of the state. Arkansas has a critical need for technology jobs, and Democrats will fill these jobs with Arkansans who have been trained in these fields. Democrats will protect broadband access by restoring net neutrality.

### Arkansas Democrats will help small businesses grow.

Responsible business growth requires expanding entrepreneurship, developing our existing businesses, recruiting new business, funding the state's infrastructure, and increasing higher education and other postsecondary opportunities and programs. Through targeted laws, Democrats will ensure that small businesses thrive throughout Arkansas.

Arkansas Democrats will guarantee paid leave to Arkansas workers.

We will pass laws to provide Democrats believe it is crucial that families with paid parental leave upon the birth or adoption of a child. Democrats will guarantee that working Arkansas have access to paid sick and vacation leave.

Arkansas Democrats will protect Arkansas farmers.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas recognizes the importance of a strong farm economy. Agriculture makes up 25 percent of Arkansas's economy and provides one of every five jobs in our state. The Party believes our state and nation are best served when the agriculture sector is based on a family-farm system. A federal Farm Bill is a key part of ensuring Arkansas's farming families receive the support they need. Democrats firmly believe our congressional delegation must fight for a Farm Bill that works for all Arkansas farmers and promotes our rural economy.

Democrats recognize the need for a strong national and international farm policy that encourages the expansion of exports of Arkansas agricultural products in the global market. We support a farm policy that embodies a safety net concept that serves as a tool to allow our efficient, productive farmers to weather the financial hardship caused by economic and natural disasters. Democrats will pass laws that enlarge Arkansas's agricultural economy, including biofuels, hemp, and organics.

Arkansas Democrats will build the transportation network Arkansas needs for the 21st Century.

A strong system of transportation infrastructure—in the form of ports, bridges, highways, airports, and rail improve interstate and intrastate commerce, build tourism, shorten the distance between families and friends, strengthen public safety, and enhance our overall quality of life. We must look to responsible and prudent highway financing programs to meet the ever-changing needs of our state and take into account local communities' thoughts and wishes. The Democratic Party will be aggressive in developing plans for infrastructure projects that will benefit rural and underserved communities as well as the urban and suburban centers of the state.

In an era of increasing fuel costs and environmental threats from climate change, creativity in the development of transportation programs, including mass transit and trail systems, that do not rely solely on fossil fuels and traditional passenger automobiles will be encouraged. Democrats will build safe streets with miles of lanes and trails for cycling and pedestrians.

Democrats support the development of high-speed internet networks to all homes and businesses so that everyone, especially rural and underserved areas, can access, upload, and download content at high speeds and fully participate in e-commerce. We support increased consumer choice through the encouragement of expanded competition in areas that are served by a single internet service provider. Democrats believe that all parts of rural Arkansas also deserve access to reliable cell coverage.

## **Arkansas Democrats Believe in Protecting the Natural State**

### **Arkansas Democrats will maintain the beauty of our state and lead a tourism boom.**

Our state is blessed with abundant beauty, and Democrats will prioritize the protection of our natural heritage, supporting our local economies by making Arkansas a must-visit destination for tourists. We will protect and sustain hunting, fishing, and recreational areas. We will expand hiking and cycling trails. We will create and expand programs to train Arkansans in the tourism industry. Democrats will ensure that our national and state parks, including the unique Buffalo River, are protected.

### **Arkansas Democrats will tackle the challenge of climate change to create jobs.**

Climate change threatens our way of life in Arkansas, holding the potential to devastate our agricultural sector, drive up costs for the basic necessities of life, and fundamentally alter our state's treasured, scenic wilderness and plentiful hunting and fishing opportunities. Arkansas Democrats are committed to solutions that combat global climate change.

Green energy is the future, and we will invest in solar, wind, hydroelectric, and other carbon-free renewable energy resources. This new industry will provide jobs in every area of the state and will allow us to leave the Natural State in a better condition than we received it, a legacy to future generations.

### **Arkansas Democrats will keep our water and air clean.**

Arkansas faces other environmental challenges, such as wetlands conservation, forest management, protection of rivers, streams, and aquifers, access to recycling, sustainable agricultural methods, phasing out fossil fuels, cleaning up industrial pollution, and addressing other contributors to air and water pollution. We will make sure that the water Arkansans drink and the air we breathe remains clean and pollution-free. Environmental justice is an issue of race and poverty, especially an intersection of these factors. Arkansas Democrats will tackle these complex issues from the perspective of environmental justice.

## **Arkansas Democrats Believe In Equal Rights**

The Democratic Party empowers Arkansans. We acknowledge the impact of oppression of African-Americans, Latinx, Native Americans, women, Asian-Americans, and other communities. Democrats pledge to continue our fight against discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, socioeconomic status, and disability.

We support legislation addressing hate crimes. Arkansans must be protected from harm inflicted on them on the basis of any of the above characteristics.

### **Arkansas Democrats will pass laws that recognize that Black lives matter.**

Far too many African-Americans face a daily struggle for respect, recognition, and safety. Arkansas Democrats are proud members of the movement to promote freedom and policies that

combat racism and undo its harmful legacy. Just as progressives supported the Civil Rights Movement, Arkansas Democrats support the Black lives matter movement as we work to increase freedom, respect, and well-being for African-Americans in Arkansas. Democrats will enact measures that protect the vote, prevent police brutality, end mass incarceration, and stop systemic racism in housing, employment, and business.

#### Arkansas Democrats will empower women.

We believe all citizens, women as well as men, deserve to be included in the Constitution. The Democratic Party of Arkansas supports the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. We support equal pay for equal work, and we will end gender-based employment discrimination.

We reaffirm the constitutionally established right of privacy and choice. We pledge to defend the rights laid out in *Roe v. Wade*. We trust women to make their own decisions about their bodies and their health care. Democrats believe women should have access to affordable birth control. Arkansas's maternal mortality rate is nearly twice the national rate, and Democrats will ensure that women have access to affordable health care before, during, and after their pregnancies.

#### Arkansas Democrats will continue to strongly support the rights of the LGBTQ+ community.

We will add sexual orientation and gender identity as protected classes to the Civil Rights Act of Arkansas. Democrats will protect LGBTQ+ Arkansans against discrimination in marriage, employment, housing, and public accommodations.

#### Arkansas Democrats will enact comprehensive immigration reform.

Arkansans are known for their welcoming nature and hospitality, and Democrats believe we must welcome the stranger. Our nation is a country of immigrants, strengthened by diversity. We will enact comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level that restores the rule of law, enhances American security, and recognizes the importance of family unity. Democrats support state laws that are practical and humane in their approach toward undocumented individuals already in Arkansas. We will protect refugees fleeing persecution and oppression. We oppose Arkansas counties' participation in Section 287(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

#### Arkansas Democrats support responsible gun ownership.

The Democratic Party of Arkansas supports the right to bear arms as set forth in the Second Amendment. Democrats believe that all Arkansans should be able to work, learn, worship, and play without fear of gun violence. We are committed to pursuing common sense regulations that provide for the safety of our communities while maintaining our Second Amendment rights.

#### Arkansas Democrats will enact landlord-tenant reform and reduce homelessness.

Democrats will enact landlord-tenant reform that guarantees protections for tenants, including

ensuring the habitability of rental housing, and ends the practice of jailing tenants for making late rental payments. We will implement reforms that end homelessness and provide affordable housing to all Arkansans in need.

#### Arkansas Democrats will protect religious freedom.

Arkansans must be allowed to practice their religion in peace. Democrats support the right of individuals to pray in school while opposing government officials from mandating prayer. We believe that laws couched as promoting religious liberty should not be used as a tool to allow discrimination against other Arkansans.

#### **Arkansas Democrats Believe in Equal Justice under the Law**

Democrats will keep Arkansans safe. Citizens must be allowed to live, work, and play safely. The Democratic Party of Arkansas supports a justice system that is fair, timely, and properly punishes those convicted of crimes. Democrats believe that lifting people out of poverty with opportunity, education, and jobs is the best long-term strategy for deterring crime.

#### Arkansas Democrats will reform policing and end police misconduct.

Democrats believe our communities are safer when law enforcement and the people they serve work together. Building and maintaining community trust is the cornerstone of effective policing. We believe it is on all of us to speak out about disparities in our criminal justice system, just as it is on all of us to stand up for those who put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities.

Democrats will provide additional training for officers on implicit bias, de-escalation, and creating guidelines for the appropriate use of force. We will provide additional funds for the inclusion of non-police health workers with expertise in mental health and crisis management. We encourage better police-community relations, requiring the use of body cameras, and stopping the use of weapons of war that have no place in our communities. We will end racial profiling that targets individuals on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, or national origin.

#### Arkansas Democrats will end mass incarceration.

Democrats are committed to fixing our criminal justice system. We will reform mandatory minimum sentences and ban for-profit private prisons and detention centers. Research and evidence, rather than slogans and sound bites, must guide criminal justice policies.

Those who commit crimes must be held responsible. We advocate restorative justice programs dedicated to rehabilitation and effective reentry policies so that those convicted of crime pay their debt to society and become fully productive contributors to society upon their release.

The war on drugs has largely been a failure, resulting in millions of people being imprisoned unnecessarily, doing little to nothing to stop drug addiction, and cost taxpaying Americans billions of dollars. Addiction should be seen first and foremost as a health care crisis rather than

a criminal justice issue. As such, Arkansas Democrats support efforts to bring safety to our community by ending imprisonment of people addicted to drugs and directing them instead to treatment programs.

Arkansas Democrats will renew and strengthen protections against domestic violence.

Our party will always act in the best interest of victims, communities, and taxpayers. Domestic violence affects women, children, and families in a particularly egregious manner. Democrats support policies and practices that stop domestic violence and make our homes safer places. We support the Violence Against Women Act as a key component for making Arkansas a safer place for women. Democrats support the state's Domestic Peace Fund and will provide law enforcement with better training, more tools, and adequate resources to end domestic violence.

Arkansas Democrats will keep medical marijuana available to patients and study the legalization and taxation of recreational marijuana.

Democrats will end criminal penalties for personal use of marijuana and the practice of incarcerating Americans for possession of cannabis. Democrats endorse studies of how to move forward with the regulated cultivation and sale of recreational marijuana and a taxation plan that benefits the state.

Arkansas Democrats will end human trafficking and stop online predators in Arkansas.

Democrats believe in supporting our law enforcement and pooling Arkansas's safety resources in a collaborative effort to protect children by keeping online predators off the internet and educating children, parents, and teachers about online abuse and the value of online safety.

Our party opposes the scourge of human trafficking. We will strengthen and pass laws that punish perpetrators and empower victims to fight back against human trafficking.

Arkansas Democrats will reform our juvenile justice system.

The juvenile justice system in Arkansas is broken. Detention is still used as a routine form of punishment rather than diversion to treatment to address the needs of the specific child. Children involved with the juvenile justice system in Arkansas, many times, need trauma informed care rather than detention being used in a punitive way. Still other parents see their children removed from them after requesting assistance through the Families in Need of Services (FINS) process. Arkansas Democrats will reform juvenile justice, where fewer children are at risk of delinquency, and FINS by investing in community resources that keep children with their families, save taxpayers' millions of dollars, and lead to safer communities. Democrats envision a future where all children and families are provided the support they need to embrace every possible opportunity to live safe, healthy lives.

**Arkansas Democrats Believe in Honoring Our Commitments**

Arkansas Democrats will support our veterans.

We believe the single most important element in our military is the individual soldier, sailor, marine, and airman, and it is absolutely critical that we support those who defend us. To honor

the men and women who serve our country, the Democratic Party of Arkansas will fund our commitments to service members, veterans, and their families.

We support the continuation and enhancement of veterans benefits, including post-military training, access to higher education, medical care, mental health services, and disability benefits. The Democratic Party supports placing veterans health care clinics in rural and underserved areas. Democrats will enforce laws guaranteeing service members the right to return to their previous jobs without delay or loss of seniority. The Democratic Party will end veteran homelessness by putting in place policies to provide homes to our veterans.

#### Arkansas Democrats will protect Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid.

Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are Democratic creations. We oppose any steps to turn Medicare over to insurance companies or Social Security over to Wall Street and oppose raising the retirement eligibility to age 70. We recognize that Medicaid provides life-sustaining coverage for many who are seriously disabled and in need of costly, ongoing care, and we will continue funding Medicaid. Democrats will protect the pensions of all Arkansans, including those in the private and public sectors.

#### Arkansas Democrats will protect first responders.

We honor the work and sacrifices made by first responders to keep Arkansans safe. We will raise their salaries and provide them the equipment and training they need. We led the way in passing a new law to guarantee health care coverage for firefighters harmed on the job, and we will continue to fight to make sure first responders have access to health care.

#### **Arkansas Democrats Believe in Public Service**

The Democratic Party of Arkansas believes individual involvement is vital to the health of our democracy. Arkansans have a responsibility to participate fully in their democracy in the voting booth and through using their constitutionally protected freedoms of speech and association. We encourage all Arkansans to take an active role in civic and social affairs through any combination of military service, public service, political participation, community engagement, and volunteerism.

Government has a responsibility to serve the people of Arkansas in a responsible manner, valuing the input of all, respecting civil liberties, and operating ethically. As such, acts of public corruption by any state or local official should be met with zero tolerance and aggressive prosecution. State government has a responsibility to use tax dollars wisely, always recognizing that the buildings and lands of the state are owned by the people rather than those who happen to be in power at a given moment. The combination of an engaged public and a responsive, fair-minded government will ensure the promotion of the common good.

If elected, Democrats will work tirelessly to enact the policies and values listed above. Arkansas Democrats know that these policies and values, when put in place in a spirit of cooperation with all, will result in better lives for all Arkansans.