

2002 Snohomish County Democratic Platform

Approved at the Snohomish County Democratic Convention on 20 April 2002.

Summary

Snohomish County Democrats believe that—

- Universal economic justice is the foundation on which healthy families, healthy communities, and a free and prosperous nation rest.
- Good agricultural practices provide a healthy economy as well as sound nutrition.
- Public education is the paramount duty of state government, because universal access to excellent schools is the surest path to equality, opportunity, prosperity, and the continuing preservation of our democratic heritage.
- The air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land and all its inhabitants must be protected for current and future generations.
- We need coordinated, comprehensive, long-term planning and funding for highways, transit, rail, and water transportation.
- All people are entitled to dignity and respect.
- All people should have adequate health care and nurture.
- The foreign policy of the United States should be cooperative rather than directive.
- Criminal justice, crime prevention, and victims' support services must be fully funded and supported.
- We should work together to achieve our common goals.

Labor

Snohomish County Democrats believe that universal economic justice is the foundation on which healthy families, healthy communities, and a free and prosperous nation rest.

Satisfied, productive employees are the engine business needs to keep our economy strong. Women, people of color, people with disabilities, and sexual minorities need to earn equal pay for comparable work.

Industrial, agricultural, and professional workers require protection in their legal right to organize into unions in order to bargain collectively to improve their lot. Those exploiting migrant, temporary, and contract workers harm all workers and also harm those employers trying to treat their workers well. Prevailing wage laws for work under government contracts protects family income and provides a good tax base.

Effective, efficient government requires competent, professional employees. Our state and local government employees require and deserve a competitive and commensurate wage.

Agriculture

Snohomish County Democrats believe that supporting good agricultural practice provides a healthy economy as well as sound nutrition.

An abundant and safe food supply is of paramount importance to maintain our families. Providing bio-protection from harmful products brought to the farm and maintaining food safety are critical for our future.

Agriculture is our nation's largest export sector. Our farm products should be protected from unfair international trade with those countries that ignore established environmental and animal husbandry practices.

We must work towards holistic farming, as engineered and maintained by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). This looks at all agricultural needs and activities required to achieve sound management that is also environmentally friendly. These standards provide a sustainable economic base to support families on farms as well as maintaining animal health and safety.

Local governments should work to promote locally grown products. In addition, government needs to help support our vanishing farms as much as government is willing to support commercial and industrial interests by building roads, cutting red tape, and slashing costs.

Education

Snohomish County Democrats believe that public education is the paramount duty of state government, because universal access to excellent schools is the surest path to equality, opportunity, prosperity, and the continuing preservation of our democratic heritage.

Ancestry, race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, or financial means of the family or school district should not limit educational opportunities. Schools must account for the resources they use and lives they touch.

Universal pre-school access allows every child a chance to prepare for the task of learning. Schools should be safe, secure, and nurturing. The ratio of students to actual classroom teachers should be reduced.

Each child's different physical abilities, mental capabilities, and emotional development require accommodation. It is vital we fully fund these accommodations and support these educators that implement them by simplifying and clarifying the legalities involved.

Age-appropriate instruction about reproduction, sexuality, drug abuse, and communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, should be encouraged.

Education reform should focus on skill development, student success, and parental participation.

A future strong economy depends on the current availability and affordability of excellent post-secondary educational opportunities. We need collegiate and vocational training opportunities for immediate post-secondary students and for continued education later in life. School-to-work partnerships among public education, organized labor, and business serve students well.

Excellent primary, secondary, vocational, and post-secondary programs require caring and competent professional educators. Educators require a competitive and commensurate wages and benefits based upon their education and responsibility as compared to other professionals.

Growth and Environment

Snohomish County Democrats believe that the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land and all its inhabitants must be protected for current and future generations.

Conscientious implementation, funding, and enforcement of the Growth Management Act helps limit urban sprawl, keep the integrity of agricultural areas, protect wildlife and forests, and allow responsible growth. Intelligent planning requires full and concurrent mitigation by those causing the growth. Current taxpayers should not subsidize developers.

Personal or corporate gain must not endanger the long-term viability of the environment. Raw material and land use should be sustainable over the long term as the best protection for all our jobs and environment. We should encourage conservation and use of renewable energy sources.

Protecting natural ecosystems sustains the biosphere. We support continued efforts towards improving the comprehensive regional Puget Sound salmon recovery plans.

Transportation

Snohomish County Democrats believe that we need coordinated, comprehensive, long-term planning and funding for highways, transit, rail, and water transportation.

Goods need to move rapidly to and from our ports by rail or truck. Our commutes take noticeably longer than just a few years ago. No metropolitan area has ever built enough highways to eliminate overcrowded roads.

Commuter bus service must be strengthened—not weakened. Any delay in Sounder commuter rail only makes matters worse.

Many people have no other choice than using public transportation to get to work, shopping, education, or recreation. Transit service needs to be provided in the most cost-effective, wide-reaching manner.

Washington State Ferries, which serve the common good, should remain under union-operated and state ownership as a part of the state highway system.

Civil and Human Rights

Snohomish County Democrats believe that all people are entitled to dignity and respect.

While there have been improvements in employment, housing, education, and opportunities for people with disabilities, equal treatment is a promise that needs fulfillment.

Government, which represents all people, must ensure that no person is discriminated against on any basis not reasonably related to the accomplishment of a legitimate purpose. It is the appropriate subject of legislation and administrative code to remedy inequality where found.

The institution of the family has undergone major changes throughout the history of the United States. The extended and nuclear families have never been exclusive.

Government and business should not discriminate against other family types.

We reaffirm the separation of church and state, and oppose the efforts of the national government or any other entity to blur the lines between church and state.

Although individual actions are subject to law, individual beliefs and values are not within governmental domain.

Business should not gather or disclose personal information except with the full knowledge and permission of the individual involved. The exchange of lawful information should not be hindered.

Individuals are more likely to receive needed medical help if they know their illness will not become a matter of public record. Government control of family planning services, or not providing access to all, is contrary to the public good.

We oppose the attack on civil rights under the guise of national security. Censorship and invasion of individual privacy must be opposed. We deplore the use of military tribunals as a means of circumventing the constitutional rights of the accused.

We deplore the use of a presidential executive order to withhold information from the public. American citizens have the right to know how the government makes decisions and to have timely access to presidential papers.

Health and Human Services

Snohomish County Democrats believe that all people should have adequate health care and nurture.

Many working poor and unemployed are denied access to ongoing health care. Children frequently are not receiving basic care and nurture. Our elders frequently lack the means to live in human dignity. There are undue restrictions on mental health care, even for many insured people. These shortsighted restrictions cost us more money in the long haul.

Hunger, homelessness, and despair are problems that exist in rural regions, suburban communities, and cities. It is a mark of our society's compassion in how we combat these issues.

A national single-payer, non-profit health plan allowing citizens to choose their health care provider is the way to solve our current health care problems. Until a national system is in place, we need full funding for the state's Basic Health Plan to help those who cannot afford insurance. The Basic Health Plan coverage should be comparable to the coverage in the private sector.

Educating the public on childcare, nutrition, and living a healthy lifestyle results in personal, community, and economic benefits. People need to live in safe communities free from neglect, abuse, and domestic violence.

Some families need assistance to provide adequate care, nutrition, and shelter. A compassionate society provides assistance to those struggling to meet responsibilities for day care, home health care, and elder care.

The state should assist in funding adequate childcare, unemployment benefits, employment assistance, medical interpreters, elder care, and transportation.

International Relations

Snohomish County Democrats believe that the foreign policy of the United States should be cooperative rather than directive.

Peace is more than the absence of war. Peace results from working for justice and human rights. The United States should actively seek justice, human rights, and reconciliation among the nations of the world.

The United Nations, its agencies, and the World Court are key tools in these efforts. The United States should expect its allies to bear their fair share of development, peacekeeping, and defense initiatives around the world. The United States should bear its fair share in these same areas, which includes our dues in the United Nations.

The United States should provide leadership towards worldwide elimination of land mines and nuclear, chemical, biological, and space-based weapons. Our nation should resist international weapon trafficking.

Our national defense should be strong enough to prevent invasion, guarantee international trade, and uphold our treaty obligations. Our military equipment should enhance service members' ability to fight and survive in battle.

We call for enforcement of the Posse Comitatus Act, which prohibits the use of military services in civilian enforcement issues.

We should negotiate fair trade agreements to improve opportunities with all willing countries. These agreements should include provisions to protect the environment, including encouraging sustainable agriculture and manufacturing. These treaties should protect the health, safety, and rights of the work force. Democratic rights should be strongly encouraged around the world.

We oppose United States corporations going offshore in order to evade United States laws and taxes.

The United States should discourage domestic companies from engaging in practices abroad that would be prohibited at home.

Criminal Justice

Snohomish County Democrats believe that criminal justice, crime prevention, and victims' support services must be fully funded and supported.

There should be equal criminal punishments for comparable crimes. Law enforcement must be effective, fair and responsive to all people, and respect individual dignity and civil rights. The criminal justice system needs to take positive steps to work with people of all cultures and backgrounds.

Crime prevention programs are more cost effective than incarceration, particularly those providing youth with recreation, intervention, and peer support. Society would benefit from alleviating the conditions of crowded court dockets, prison overcrowding, and recidivism. Rehabilitative treatment should be used whenever appropriate.

The legislature should not add to the burdens of law enforcement and the legal system through mandates without funding. Our law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, public defenders prisons and jails need adequate money to operate effectively. Drug abuse should be considered a health issue as opposed to a criminal issue.

Government and The Democratic Party

Snohomish County Democrats believe that we should work together to achieve our common goals.

Government must be effective and of the highest quality so that public trust is ensured and there is pride in civic service.

Government should support people taking responsibility for their own lives. Government serves the community, not the few. In government we have a tool for positive change, a tool too often derided.

Elections should be decided at the ballot—not at the bank.

This platform and resolutions represent the widely held concerns of Snohomish County Democrats. These are not abstract beliefs, but an agenda for action. While the platform is not a litmus test, candidates should seek implementation of the general principles. Party members pledge their active, united support for candidates that keep faith with the platform.