

Republican Party of Arkansas 2008 Platform

...reflecting the

views and values

of everyday Arkansans

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Republican Party of Arkansas Platform 2008

PREAMBLE

We, as members of the Republican Party of Arkansas offer this Platform as our blueprint for government of the people, by the people and for the people based upon the following basic principles:

- Respect, follow and always consider our limited authority under the Constitutions of the United States and of the State of Arkansas
- Develop measures that will enhance economic growth and employment.
- Encourage a productive environment that accommodates business and labor.
- Promote agricultural and rural development that will allow us to be considered leaders in the nation.
- Ensure an adequate and equitable education for all citizens.
- Create an atmosphere that would encourage tax reform and fiscal responsibility at all levels of government.
- Continue efforts to maintain justice.
- Transparency in government that ensures access by all people.
- Maintain our leadership in human and civil rights.
- Promote the general welfare by supporting traditional family values.
- Support law enforcement and their efforts to reduce drug and alcohol abuse.
- Develop long-term solutions to challenges of health issues, including Medicare and Medicaid by introducing more competition into the marketplace.
- Provide common sense initiatives that enhance our environment and natural resources.
- Support America's defenders at home and abroad, especially, in our war against terror.

We believe these principles will guide our Republican leadership and allow us to retain our greatness as a nation and influence the world to establish sound justice, relative peace, general humanity and harmony with our Creator.

1. The United States of America was founded and has prospered with a strong faith in God. We believe that all people are endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights and that we are one nation under God with freedom of religion for all.
2. We understand the Constitution of the United States to be the highest law of the land, and believe that as such these time-honored documents deserve our first consideration when making decisions of policy and law.
3. Individuals are capable of managing their own affairs and should be free to do so without undue governmental intervention. The individual and the traditional family are the foundations upon which our society and culture stand. They should be encouraged, supported, and protected.
4. Governments must only pursue policies that are in accordance with and permitted by the Constitution of the United States and of the State of Arkansas, and encourage individual initiative and responsibility for economic, political and social well-being.

5. The basic functions of government are protection of life, liberty and property, and equal justice under the law.
6. The functions of government should be executed at the most local level possible.
7. Our freedom as Americans is inseparable from our responsibility to serve our community, state and nation; to participate in our political process, and to work for the preservation of our freedom.
8. We affirm our belief in limited government. The state and federal government should make every effort to reorganize and consolidate government agencies, programs and functions to create efficiency and cost savings for taxpayers.
9. We resolve to support policies and principles that bring us together as individuals and as a nation, united in individual liberty, under the equal protection of the laws, regardless of race, nationality, origin, sex or creed.
10. We believe that the Republican Party of Arkansas best reflects the views and values of every day Arkansans..

Therefore, as the Party of Lincoln, Frederick Douglas, and Susan B. Anthony, we affirm our commitment to the historic ideals of the civil rights movement, redouble our determination to uphold equal justice and fight discrimination and prejudice. We resolve to support policies and principles that bring us together as individuals and as a nation, united in individual liberty, under the equal protection of the laws. Diversity of peoples and viewpoints are welcome in the (Arkansas) Republican Party of Arkansas.

Furthermore, we continue to support the strides that have been made in appointing and electing women and minorities in critical policy-making positions.

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT

The State of Arkansas is truly the land of opportunity with our abundant natural resources and proud, hardworking people. In spite of these wonderful attributes, our state has continued to lag behind other states in economic growth and employment. As Republicans we are making great progress in overcoming the historic impediments of a one-party system. Our vision for Arkansas is dynamic. It is rooted in free enterprise, liberty, and freedom and the belief that the individual is able to make the right decisions for one's self.

As Arkansas Republicans we believe that our state's economy will be enhanced by the following measures:

1. A Regional Economic Development Plan should be developed to expand our state's manufacturing base and service sector jobs with new opportunities. We support the Arkansas Department of Economic Development for the purpose of more effectively attracting high-tech and high quality corporate employers to Arkansas, and also strongly encourage the expansion of businesses already located in Arkansas.

2. Government must create an atmosphere that supports growth in every sector, especially the small business sector. Small Business is the catalyst that drives our state's economy. All levels of government must work to become more understanding of small business, and work to meet the needs of small businessmen and women. Burdensome regulation and over-taxation must cease for small businesses in Arkansas in order for them to survive and flourish. To this end, we favor reducing the state personal income tax to further serve as an attraction to business and industry. We strongly support education and orientation .of our youth in the free enterprise system, with the goal of encouraging the next generation of business leaders in Arkansas.

3. As a political party we recognize the need for additional emphasis in the area of economic development in our minority communities. Therefore we support the development of state and federal programs to facilitate business development and economic growth for minorities. We further believe that improving the financial standing of all our citizens will reduce crime and government dependency in Arkansas. Although the Republican Party of Arkansas does not support quotas, we do support initiatives that provide business management training, access to capital and procurement assistance to minority firms. We offer our minority citizens a vision of economic expansion and wealth development in contrast to the Democrat Party's paradigm for minimum wage jobs and public assistance..

4. We also support initiatives to create an "Ownership Society" which encourages individuals the ability to control their own resources to invest into entrepreneurial initiatives (i.e., home ownership and individual retirement accounts).

5. As Republicans, we are proud to favor fair and free trade with our entire nation's trading partners around the world. We call on those nations with trading practices unfair to our country to open their borders to the many great products that can come from the state of Arkansas. In our pursuit of fair and free trade, we should never risk losing our nation's sovereignty nor blindly export jobs to other countries that are not equally receptive to our exports.

6. Arkansas waterways, one of the great assets of the State, could play a major role in developing the state's economy. Developing the waterway infrastructure will allow us to attract manufacturing, distribution and value-added companies. We can become an import/export center for trade between the United States, Caribbean, Latin and South American markets. We encourage legislative and financial support to the development of the inland waterways and related inter-modal facilities of Arkansas.

7. Considering the great appeal of our state to many people, we strongly support efforts to make Arkansas the destination for retirees from all over America.

8. Technological advances must be maximized and incentives provided in order for Arkansas to prosper. This must be done not only in our schools and businesses, but also in agricultural industries.

BUSINESS AND LABOR

The economy of our nation and well-being of our citizens depends on a strong work ethic. The individual worker has a cherished place in American society, which thrives when incentives are directed toward production.

We strongly believe in a free enterprise system that encourages and provides individual incentives for those wishing to achieve "The American Dream."

1. We believe the cornerstone of Republican philosophy is the belief that each man or woman is an individual who is responsible for his or her place in society. The individual is encouraged to work to secure the benefits of that society for himself/herself and for his/her family as well as for those unable to care for themselves.
2. We believe no person is owed a living; however, we do realize that there are some circumstances where individuals are not capable of earning a living wage. We believe incentives such as childcare vouchers should be established to enable persons to seek employment on a timely basis, with a goal of becoming self-sufficient.
3. We believe the business sector can properly function only if it operates using high legal and ethical standards. Employees should realize that no business can exist long term unless it makes an adequate profit. A successful business/employee relationship depends upon mutual respect for each other and their ability to work as a cost-effective yet productive team.
4. We believe collective bargaining calls for reciprocal restraints. Federal law prevents an employer from coercing, interfering with, or threatening an employee for engaging in the right to organize and bargain collectively.
5. We believe employers should have the right to provide employees with relevant information in response to information given to their employees during attempts by representatives of organized labor organizations to initiate the formation of a union.
6. We believe employees should vote by secret ballot when determining whether to accept union representation. We oppose current efforts to abandon this long standing practice.
7. We believe no employee should be forced to join or pay dues to a union as a condition of employment. The Republican Party of Arkansas supports the state's right-to-work law.
8. We believe the public has a responsibility to compensate civil service employees fairly; however, public employees have the responsibility to remain on their jobs even during contract negotiation disputes.
9. We believe, because the Republican Party advocates policies that reflect the country's basic principles of free enterprise and equal opportunity, it is in the public's best interest that government contracting be performed through full and open competition, regardless of labor affiliation. The presence of this free-market competition assures the taxpayers and consumers the best possible job and product for the taxpayers' dollar. We oppose any government attempts to support anti-competitive market restrictions such as union

only requirements that discriminate against individuals, companies or organizations based on labor union affiliation.

10. We believe government over-regulation of business destroys the competitiveness of Arkansas businesses and exports jobs from Arkansas to states and countries with less reasonable regulations. It is important that future government policies continue to recognize that incentives to work, produce and invest are important keys to our economic future.

11. We believe immigration laws must be strictly enforced. Arkansas employers should not hire anyone without the proper documentation. The Republican Party of Arkansas also believes that government at all level should not reward those individuals that knowingly violate our established federal and state laws to enter our state. Cities and states should not provide "Sanctuary" to illegal immigrants.

12. We believe that government should be proactive in efforts to find and deal with illegal immigration. The Social Security Administration should identify any multiple use of Social Security numbers and turn this information over to the appropriate local, state or federal authorities.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Arkansas is a leader in agricultural production and our producers are excellent stewards of the land on which that production takes place with respect to environmental quality and conservation. Our farmers are major producers of rice, cotton, soybeans, poultry, beef and many other staple food products. Agriculture is Arkansas' number one industry and an essential part of a thriving Arkansas economy. Believing this, we support programs including:

1. Farm legislation that provides an adequate safety net for agricultural producers, promotes the unencumbered free trade of U.S. farm products in the global marketplace, and provides funding and/or tax incentives for producers to implement progressive conservation practices on environmentally sensitive lands.

2. Ongoing tax relief which is returning billions of dollars in federal income tax savings to farmers and ranchers. The administration's tax relief package increased the expensing for farm machinery and equipment purchases to \$100,000, up from \$25,000. Farmers traditionally pay 50% more in capital gains taxes than other taxpayers. The 2003 tax bill cut this tax rate to 15%, down from 20%.

3. The reauthorization of the Farm Bill to provide an adequate safety net for Arkansas' farmers.

4. Quality of life enhancements for rural residents. Arkansas has a large rural population aside from those in commercial agriculture. Many of these people are living in poverty. Education, healthcare, water treatment and community facilities are often unavailable to people in these areas thus constraining their enjoying an adequate quality of life. We support efforts to ensure a healthy and vibrant rural America where local communities and residents have opportunities and the human and financial tools to reach their goals.

5. Health care improvements for rural families. We applaud the Administration's work to make sure health care is available where people need it by expanding the system of community health centers. The new Medicare prescription drug law increases Medicare funding for doctors, hospitals and other health providers, especially in rural areas. The initiative to increase the use of health information technology will help assure better delivery of health care and medical expertise to rural Arkansans, reducing costs, improving care, and saving lives.

6. Greater opportunity for rural home ownership. Home ownership is a cornerstone of the Administration's efforts to increase economic assets and financial strength of rural Americans.

7. Protection of private property owners' rights. The Republican Party of Arkansas believes that protection of private property rights is paramount. In light of the United State's Supreme Court decision in *Kelo v. New London*, the Republican Party of Arkansas calls on the Arkansas General Assembly to re-define the definition of "public use" to ensure that private property cannot be seized by government entities for private development.

8. Educational opportunities in rural communities. The Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) of the No Child Left Behind law is providing much-needed resources to rural school districts while allowing them to make local spending decisions.

9. . We support a comprehensive Entry-Exit system for the needed Agricultural workers to supplement our own workers.

10. Education of the American public regarding specifics of the Farm Bill which in addition to supporting the farmers also includes other programs such as food stamps, school programs, WIC, etc.

EDUCATION

We recognize that although the federal and state governments have spent more and more tax dollars in the public education system, the resulting education often leaves students unprepared to join the work force or attend institutions of higher learning. We believe that all Arkansas children deserve an adequate and equitable education. Recognizing that for a republic to work it must have educated citizens, we offer the following statements:

1. Parents have the primary right and responsibility for the education of their children. The state education system should support and stimulate that parental role. School choice made possible by scholarships or a fair and well-conceived voucher program should be tested on a pilot program basis. Educational programs should support the right of individual choice, to include home schooling, charter schools, private schooling, virtual schools, distance learning programs, and choice among public schools.

2. School administration should be conducted in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The state should spend less on administrative cost than presently occurs in school districts throughout the state

3. We support the Republican efforts to enhance recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, and to increase teacher salaries based on performance.

The Republican Party of Arkansas should be the vanguard of a concerted effort between parents, teachers, administrators, local school boards, the Arkansas General Assembly, and other interested parties to support teachers in their efforts to control their classroom environment through the establishment of tougher disciplinary measures and the commitment to enforce those measures. We support implementation of reforms that have made a proven difference in actual operations of schools.

1. School mandates should come primarily from the local school boards, communities, parents, and state legislatures, not from the federal government. Legislation and funding should support these goals.

2. All high school students should receive a high-quality core curriculum to include English, mathematics, science, geography, history, and computer science. We support learn-and-earn programs which can encourage students to earn income as they prepare for the work force while receiving valuable experience.

3. Accountability and evaluation of performance is the key to reform in education, values are the core of good education.

4. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. We, therefore, support the right of the individual to pray in public schools.

5. We support Alternative Certification Programs to increase the number of qualified and caring teachers in our schools.

6. Sufficient resources should be available to assist low income students in their quest for higher education. Federal and State aid should be limited to legal residents of the State of Arkansas.

7. We promote both opportunity and responsibility for all. We must strive to improve the quality and accessibility of education for adults at every level to overcome the problem of functional illiteracy.

8. Teachers' time devoted to non-teaching duties during the academic day should be reduced, so that more time is available for individual student attention. We encourage more volunteerism, such as mentor programs, senior citizen tutors, parental involvement and business partnerships within the public schools.

9. We recommend an evaluation of the organizational relationship of the Education Department, the Education Co-ops and local school districts, to eliminate duplication of efforts and resources and to ensure that the policy decisions are made at the local level.

10. All high school students should receive driver education instruction with the use of current technology to enhance their safety skills. We support programs which can encourage students to become better and safer drivers in order to provide a safe road environment for all Arkansans. Sufficient resources should be available to provide for such instruction.

ELECTION REFORM

Goal: To promote awareness and understanding of Arkansas election laws, prevent ballot fraud, and conduct fair and honest elections.

Towards that end, the following is submitted:

1. Election laws must be vigorously enforced. Failure to comply must be reported to the appropriate authorities immediately.
2. In the spirit of a positive approach to ballot security, we support efforts to give assistance to all county election commissioners to better prepare their workers to efficiently perform their duties and to recognize any inconsistencies or irregularities in the election process.
3. We support measures that ensure public officials and voters adhere to election law. This will deter voter fraud, voter impersonation, and multiple voting by the same person. A government photo I. D. at their polling place should also be required.
4. We reaffirm the role of the county election commissioners in the conduct of all elections including early voting. The early voting process should be handled similar to a normal polling place on Election Day, including bi-partisan staffing.
5. We strongly urge all Republican county chairmen or the selected designee on the election commission, to familiarize themselves with Arkansas election laws and the American Disabilities Act in order to implement them in every election.
6. We support the hiring and training of election coordinators or other named persons in all 75 counties to organize and prepare elections in compliance with the election laws of Arkansas. Persons hired as election coordinators shall be hired and supervised by the county election commissioners.
7. Recall legislation should be enacted to give the Arkansas voters power to remove elected officials for abuses of power in office.
8. We support the Electoral College process as it presently exists.

TAX REFORM AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

We believe that the people of Arkansas deserve to have their tax dollars managed by trustworthy, capable and fiscally responsible elected officials. Only with a strong Republican Party and a viable two-party system can we have the checks and balances necessary to ensure fiscal integrity in our state and federal government. By electing qualified and trustworthy Republican candidates to office at every level of government, we can ensure effective and responsible management of our resources.

1. We are opposed to income tax increases, because they penalize creative economic activity.

2. We believe excessive capital gains taxes, whether state or federal, have a dramatically negative effect on the number and volume of capital transactions and thus reduce economic growth.
3. We are opposed to all unfunded federal and state mandates, because they cause severe financial distress for state and local governments. We support reform of the state tax code to make the passage of all taxes consistent with regard to the percentage of votes required, preferably 75%.
4. We support federal and state tax codes that promote rather than penalize marriage and the family.
5. Further, we call on Congress and the General Assembly to carefully weigh the costs and benefits of each and every action they take, and to use the best possible means to achieve the desired ends on which we all agree: To promote and encourage the creation of jobs, favorable economic climate for business, both small and large, and viable partnerships between government and the private sector which permit the effective transfer of technology and expertise for the general good. We support privatization of government services provided control of the activity rests with the government agency, and government agencies are free to bid. Arkansas is a beautiful state that has many fine attractions to bring visitors to our state. As Republicans we support the expansion of the tourism industry and all efforts to promote tourism in our state.
6. We support abolishing the remaining sales taxes on food, maintaining the \$350 property tax rebate for households, and continuing the homestead assessment cap for homeowners 65 and older. We believe sales taxes on food and drugs are an unfair burden on Arkansas families and should be eliminated. It should be recognized that these tax breaks would be helpful to all families.
7. We support the permanent repeal of death taxes at both the Federal and State level which are double taxation applied against assets remaining after income taxes have originally been paid. Death taxes reduce the ability of families to be self-sufficient, and they encourage wealthy retirees to settle in states that have no death taxes. They are destructive of family farms and family-owned businesses.
8. We oppose tax increases and unwarranted and unnecessary fee increases.
9. We support legislation that will permanently dedicate all General Improvement Funds to critical state-wide needs such as Arkansas prisons, water resource development, highways, higher education and other genuine critical needs, thus eliminating most pork-barrel projects from state funding.
10. We support the increase in the exemption on retirement income from the state income tax.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

We believe that an effective criminal justice system must act swiftly, impartially and with certainty to punish wrongdoers in order to deter crime. No alteration to the criminal justice system can be expected to significantly diminish criminal conduct until we fully

acknowledge the related impact of failed liberal social programs that have proven to actually encourage and subsidize the destruction of families. Even a perfect criminal justice system will deter criminal conduct and maintain safety and order only when all families fulfill their absolute responsibility to instill certain values in their children. To restore effectiveness and public confidence in the criminal justice system, so that citizens of Arkansas can enjoy a free and open society and feel secure in their persons and property, we believe the following:

1. We strongly believe that the ultimate solution to crime problems rests in individual responsibility and accountability.
2. The Party should encourage ongoing alternative juvenile reform programs appropriate, including private sector programs for juvenile sex offenders and "boot camps" as a method of reforming first time criminal offenders as an alternative to imprisonment alone. We hold the belief that juveniles and adults be held separately.
3. We support the implementation of "Katie's Law" legislation in the State of Arkansas. This is a law that requires DNA testing for felony arrests.
4. Ensure that victims of crime have a voice in the criminal judicial system, not just the criminals. We insist that victims' rights are protected as follows:
 - Full restitution for the victim at the expense of the perpetrator
 - Protection from intimidation or violence by the offender
 - Notification of court proceedings
 - Right to remain in court during trials and hearings
 - Has a voice in the plea bargain and sentencing proceedings
 - Notice of escape or release of offenders.
5. Reform the grand jury system by requiring the Circuit Judge of a county to convene a grand jury when 10% of those voting in the last gubernatorial election in the county sign a petition calling for a grand jury.
6. We support construction of more prison space as needed and use of economic alternatives such as private prisons.
7. Local and state management of prisons, with emphasis on both punishment and rehabilitation of prisoners.
8. Uniform and vigorous enforcement of the Domestic Abuse Act.
9. Meaningful reform of the probation system, with accountability and increased monitoring.
10. Reform and possible elimination of the parole process and furloughs for persons convicted of violent crimes..

11. Prohibit the use of public office as a shield from prosecution. We support revocation of pension rights or other benefits of public officials who are convicted of high crimes such as felonies or serious misdemeanors committed while in office.
12. Initiate a monitoring system to ensure and increase accountability in all phases of the judicial process.
13. The Party maintains that the priority of our prisons is the protection of society and the punishment of the offender.
14. Prisoners should be allowed to perform meaningful work in proportion to their skills and abilities.
15. No convicted felon should be given organ transplants at taxpayer's expense.
16. Capital punishment, when properly applied is a deterrent to crime and should be used. It should also be done swiftly after the last appeal.
17. The Party believes a person who commits forcible rape upon a minor deserves to be imprisoned for life without parole.
18. We strongly urge parental responsibility in protecting their children from inappropriate video, print, and online content, and support enforcement of existing laws regarding pornography.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

America is a vibrant and progressive nation thanks to the free and open exchange of information that has been firmly established through more than two centuries of daily practice and the law. We enthusiastically uphold the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that declares, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free expression thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

The Arkansas Freedom of Information Act of 1967 was among the first achievements of Governor Winthrop Rockefeller's administration. It is a tribute to Governor Rockefeller that for more than three decades this Act has opened the actions of all levels of governmental bodies to public view and participation. We encourage strengthening this Act whenever weaknesses may appear. We also oppose any type of regulation that negatively affects the ability of Arkansans to obtain access to public information.

HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Republican Party is the party of the open door. All Arkansans who believe in our goals of rewards equal to effort expended, freedom, justice, and responsive government are urged to join us

Arkansas Republicans, as members of the Party of Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglas, and Susan B. Anthony, believe that human rights, civil rights, and due process must be equally available to all persons without regard to race, ethnic background, age, sex, religion or physical condition.

1. Bigotry has no place in our state. We denounce those persons, organizations, publications and movements which practice or promote racism, hate actions or religious intolerance.

2. We believe all Americans should have equal opportunity regardless of race, nationality, origin, sex or creed.

3. We recognize that there are differing views on the issue of abortion, and the Republican Party Platform remains pro-life. The unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life as stated in the Declaration of Independence which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution of the United States and we endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children. Our purpose is to have legislative and judicial protection of that right to life against those who perform abortions. We oppose using public revenues for abortion and organizations which advocate it. We support the appointment of judges who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life.

4. We deplore the barbaric D & X procedure (partial birth abortions). We commend our former Governor Mike Huckabee and state legislature for passing the partial-birth abortion law. We commend President Bush and the previous Congress for passing and signing into law the Partial-Birth Abortion Act. We believe all innocent human lives should be respected and safeguarded from conception to natural death. We pray for reversal of Roe v. Wade. We oppose assisted suicide, euthanasia and genocide.

5. We commend those who provide alternatives to abortion by meeting the needs of pregnant women and providing adoption services.

6. The use of government dependency programs withers initiative and entraps generations in despair. We encourage education, training and business opportunities that offer hope and independence. We fully support the Americans for Disabilities Act and the elimination of barriers in order to ensure equal opportunities for the physically disabled. We support federal and state welfare reform initiatives such as welfare-to-work to help break the cycle of poverty. We encourage private groups and faith based organizations to use their own creativity and initiative to explore private alternatives to government assistance.

. 7 . We strongly support Second Amendment rights. The Republican Party of Arkansas fully recognizes the Constitutional right of citizens to keep and bear arms. We recognize that people, not guns, commit crimes..

. 8. The RP A supports a national right-to-carry law for persons with concealed permits to travel freely on inter-state journeys.

9. The Republican Party of Arkansas opposes all work involved in human cloning. We believe each life is designed and created by God and has purpose.

10. We deplore all forms of discrimination based on creed, race, color, national origin, sex, age, and disabling condition. We oppose the use of race and gender-based preferences in the areas of public education.

11. The Republican Party of Arkansas believes all Americans have the right to practice their religious faith free of persecution, intimidation, and violence. We acknowledge that the church is a God-ordained institution with a sphere of authority separate from that of civil government. Thus, churches, synagogues, and other places of worship should not be regulated, controlled, or taxed by any level of civil government. This fundamental right is necessary to maintain a free and healthy democratic society. This right also strengthens our civil government and creates a free but responsible society.

We support local responsibility of the community to assure adequate and efficient care of those persons who, through no fault of their own or family, cannot care for themselves. We encourage private groups and faith based organizations to use their own creativity and initiative to explore private alternatives to government assistance.

We believe references to the Creator in the Declaration of Independence are very important. We will work to keep the reference to "One Nation Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and on our monies. We reject that this phrase violates the separation of Church and state.

The Republican Party of Arkansas recognizes the "separation of Church and State" doesn't mean there can be no references to God in government sanctioned activities or public buildings.

We believe it is important to acknowledge the references to God in the Declaration of Independence: "We are endowed by our Creator with the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

We recognize the importance of the Declaration of Independence in American founding and history. We will protect the declaration as our rights are given by God, not government. We believe without this statement, we cede our rights to government.

We reject banning all prayer in public schools. We support the rights of high school students saying thanks to God in a graduation speech.

We believe the statements regarding religion and morality made by our Founding Fathers are just as important today as they were 200 years ago.

FAMILY VALUES

The Republican Party of Arkansas supports the traditional definition of marriage as a God-ordained, legal and moral commitment between a man and a woman, and we believe that marriage is the foundational unit of a healthy society. We believe in the sanctity of

marriage and that the integrity of this institution should be defended, protected, strengthened, and nurtured at all levels of government. We urge the repeal of laws that place an unfair tax burden on families, including the marriage penalty tax. We believe that each individual family has the primary responsibility for its own welfare, including education, moral training, and conduct.

We believe that the traditional family unit provides an optimum environment to rear, adopt, or be foster parents to children.

HOMELAND SECURITY

We believe the global war against terrorism is the transcendent challenge of this generation.

We applaud the fact that our nation has not been the subject of a successful terrorist attack in the United States for the last seven years since the September 11, 2001 attack. We believe this success, in part, is the result of greater security efforts at home but to a greater extent this success is because of the courageous actions of our armed forces engaged overseas taking the offense in the global war on terrorism.

We support reducing the strain on our military by increasing U.S. armed forces authorized personnel. We support increased support of our veterans particularly with the highest quality medical care. We vigorously resist the attempt by any government agency to nullify or reduce earned benefits to our personnel, including health care, education, and other benefits to veterans.

We grieve for the brave men and women who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for their country. Their memory will live on in our hearts and their sacrifice will never be forgotten or taken for granted.

We also support the police, firefighters and other emergency responders who are on the front line here at home. In Arkansas, we urge more diligence in seeking appropriated and available federal grant funds for training, exercises and equipment for our first responders and disaster recovery efforts.

IMMIGRATION

The Republican Party of Arkansas recognizes the important contributions immigrants from all nations have made to the economic and cultural strength of the United States. We believe that, as a nation of laws, the integrity of our immigration system is undermined by the flagrant disregard of our laws by those who illegally enter our country. We oppose extension of amnesty to illegal aliens.

We believe that the foundation of an effective immigration policy must begin by securing our borders. We recognize that to protect our borders the federal government must continue to accelerate border security measures such as increasing the number of border patrol agents and greater utilization of technology and physical barriers.

Since it is estimated that 40% of the illegal aliens in our country result from overstaying a legitimately issued visa, we support a stronger commitment to the development of a workable and efficient exit system for foreign travelers.

We also recognize that illegal workers will continue to use every means to come to the United States as long as there are employers who hire them. For that reason, we support an electronic employer verification system that will require the employer to verify legal status prior to hiring.

With this combination of effective border security, a comprehensive entry-exit system for foreign visitors, and an employer verification system, we are convinced a nation, as great as the United States, can secure and protect its borders from those who would unlawfully enter. This will restore integrity to the discredited immigration system that is vital to a prosperous America.

We also support a greater partnership by the State of Arkansas and federal authorities in the area of immigration enforcement. We are disappointed that the present Democrat administration in Arkansas refuses to allow the Arkansas State Police to be trained and engaged in immigration enforcement under federal and state legislation that authorizes the partnership.

The State of Arkansas should also work to verify proof of legal presence in the country before the issuance of state identity documents such as driver's licenses. This is an essential requirement to the exploitation of identity documents by illegal aliens but it is also a deterrent to terrorists.

We recognize that Arkansas is blessed with a growing number of immigrants that are working hard, fulfilling their obligation as to community and country, and contributing greatly to the social fabric of this great State. We support every effort to assimilate the new citizens of our state into our language and culture while at the same time trying to gain a better appreciation for their own unique history and culture.

We support the English language as the official language for the United States.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE

Despite the historic progress made in reducing illegal drug use in the United States (50% reduction since the late 1970's), substance abuse continues to threaten the strength of our families, communities and work force. Arkansas Republicans support the balanced approach to fighting illegal drug abuse including tough law enforcement, effective drug education efforts and drug treatment programs with accountability.

We oppose efforts to decriminalize or legalize harmful drugs including marijuana.

We support periodic evaluations of education programs for tobacco, drug and alcohol abuse to assure greater funding for effective programs.

In Arkansas, we applaud the recent successful efforts to restrict the precursor chemicals used in the manufacture of methamphetamine. Now, we recognize the greater challenge

is the methamphetamine imported to Arkansas by national and international criminal organizations.

We applaud the recent designation of part of Arkansas as the HIDT A (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) program which will increase federal funding for enforcement efforts against these major criminal organizations operating in Arkansas. In order to more effectively partner with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, we urge a greater commitment of state police resources to counter narcotics efforts.

We support enhanced penalties for those who are found operating a methamphetamine lab and engaged in the distribution of meth.

We support proven effective programs such as "Operation Weed and Seed" which targets high-crime neighborhoods with a combined strategy of prevention and crime control.

We support the continued expansion of Drug Treatment Courts in Arkansas which combines effective treatment with accountability and has been proven to reduce recidivism among participants. We urge increased state funding of drug treatment courts.

We recognize that there has been a historic disparity in the sentencing of cocaine offenders. Those convicted of "crack cocaine" offenses have been sentenced to much longer prison sentences than those convicted of "powder cocaine" offenses. This difference has resulted in a greater incarceration rate for African-American offenders. We applaud the recent steps of the U.S. Sentencing Commission in reducing this disparity.

We support an effective state parole system that assures adequate supervision including drug screening. We also support an expansion of private sector efforts and community support for the employment of offenders who have fulfilled their sentence. This reintegration of offenders into society is essential to avoid recidivism.

ENVIRONMENT. NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY POLICY

Arkansas Republicans should take a leadership role in challenging all private business and citizens to protect natural resources and environment without further government regulations. The health and beauty of Arkansas and indeed all of America is important to us and future generations. We should encourage recycling to reduce waste, conservation of energy including the use of renewable energy sources, and choosing products which are not harmful to plants and wildlife.

We also support realistic efforts to promote a thriving natural environment, enhancing quality of life, and advancing economic prosperity including:

1. Improvement of air quality.
2. Improvement of water quality, conservation of wetlands, and resolution of water CrISIS.
3. Hazardous waste site clean up and redevelopment.

4. Promotion of land conservation and stewardship.
5. Development of a realistic growth-oriented and scientifically based approach to global climate change.

Our nation's dependence on foreign oil is a threat to national security, and the exorbitant energy prices are a threat to our economy. In 2006 the Democrats promised that if given control of Congress, they would enact policies to lower gas prices. Since January 2007 gas prices have skyrocketed, and the do-nothing Democrat Congress has yet to take action.

Our country has vast oil reserves in the coastal regions that have been off-limits since the 1980s. In light of \$4.00 per gallon gasoline, this policy is failing the American people. The policies maintained by this current Congress and supported by the radical environmentalists pose a grave danger to our national security and economy and must be reversed.

We believe that a long-term strategy for energy independence must include:

- Opening of the Outer Continental Shelf, oil shale regions, and other domestic sources of oil for exploration and drilling now.
- Loosening of the environmental regulations that make it impossible to build new oil refineries..
- Investments in new nuclear and hydroelectric power plants.

Care must be taken to prevent violations of the Constitutional and Civil Rights of American citizens. Property rights must be protected and preserved if we are to maintain a solid economy. We deplore the use of fear and radical environmentalist threats to justify violation or trampling of citizens rights.

MEDICARE. MEDICAID AND OTHER HEALTH ISSUES

The Republican Party of Arkansas expresses support for:

1. Long-term Medicare solutions:
 - Form a bipartisan commission to make recommendations.
 - Assure long-term solvency by implementing cost saving measures that reduce bureaucracy, fraud and abuse.
 - Implementation of optional plans that combine public and private efforts to provide citizen access to and choices among various kinds of coverage.
2. Medical Savings Accounts allows people to own and control their healthcare.
3. Freedom to choose fee-for-service plans.
4. Choices among various managed care plans.
5. Optional long-term care choices, including nursing home, hospice and home health care for certain diseases such as Alzheimer's.

6. Tax-deductible premiums for these and other such options.
7. Medicaid block grants to states with "No Federal Strings". Arkansas Republicans believe that such strings defeat the purpose of state grants. Distribution of Medicaid grant funds should be left to the discretion of each state.
8. Medical tort liability reform: Arkansas Republicans believe health care costs can be reduced by tort reform of medical liability regulations and statutes by limiting the circumstances under which such cases may be properly pursued and the extent of damage claims involving pain and suffering.
9. Freedom to choose doctors outside of the Medicare system: Arkansas Republicans hold that neither Medicare patients nor doctors choosing to practice outside the Medicare system should be fined or otherwise punished for non-cooperation with the Medicare system.
10. We believe that all citizens who are under Medicare should be free to voluntarily pay doctors out of personal funds for such medical care, even when rendered outside the Medicare system.
11. Further Arkansas Republicans support the repeal of all statutes, laws and regulations that would permit the Medicare system to pressure, prosecute, pursue, fine or otherwise punish any such patient or doctor.
12. To ensure continuity of patient care when employers change health insurance plans and providers, we support the flexibility for physicians to provide services for any managed health care plan in any state that they are licensed to practice.
13. The Republican Party of Arkansas encourages Congress to pass legislation to treat mental and physical illnesses equitably and fairly.
14. The Party endorses efforts to implement more access to Community Based Health Centers; to better meet the health care needs of the uninsured and underinsured in their communities.
15. We support the plan to use Association Health Plans to help small businesses on behalf of their employees; Health Savings Accounts so Americans can get help with out-of-pocket medical expenses; and a creation of refundable tax credit to help low income families purchase health insurance.
16. We support the removal of regulations that inhibit true competition among physicians, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, and insurance companies.

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