



South Dakota Democratic Party Platform

Adopted by the South Dakota Democratic Convention

July 9th, 2022

Agriculture and Rural Development

The South Dakota Democratic Party recognizes the integral role of the agricultural sector and its contribution to the economy in our state and nation. Democrats are dedicated to keeping our agrarian culture vibrant—from family farms, farmers market producers, Native Nations and all rural communities.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- The expansion of local food and farmers markets along with regional ag-producing systems that focus on diverse and sustainable practices.
- Minimizing the impact of corporate control in order to protect producers from unfair practices or inequitable concentration of profit.
- Partnerships with Native Nations, tribal leaders, and individuals to develop new agricultural processes, including hemp and renewable energy.
- Research and economic development of value-added agricultural products including hemp, perennial grains, renewable energy, and other emerging ag-based technologies.
- Programs that support and educate emerging producers, to help establish the next generation of agriculturalists.
- The proper and full implementation of a production-based tax assessment system and distribution for agricultural land in South Dakota.
- Local control of planning and zoning as the right of individual counties. We support the people's right to a transparent initiated measure or referendum process at the state, county and local levels.
- Preservation and protection of farmland through soil conservation and sound sustainable ecological practices for generational purposes.
- Governmental programs that allow consumer support and creative agricultural solutions.



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- Regional, national, and international fair trade deals and Country of Origin Labeling for all food products.
- A voluntary, but not federally-mandated, national livestock identification program to improve animal disease control & traceability.
- Construction and maintenance of local infrastructure, including rural water, an enhanced railroad system, and high-speed broadband access to make rural businesses more competitive.
- To support the renewable biofuels ethanol and biodiesel and the expansion thereof.
- The separation of the DANR back to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the Agriculture Department.
- Support individual and local landowner rights.



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Economic Development & Tourism

Economic development enhances the quality of life and standard of living of all South Dakota citizens. State policies should promote innovation and long-term growth in all sectors of the economy without diminishing our state's cultural and natural environments; a sustainable diversified economy benefits all the people of South Dakota.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- An educated and trained workforce that earns a wage comparable to the national wage in the United States based on cost-of-living index from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Education is essential for personal and economic development and the state has a responsibility to make it a key priority.
- Facilitate expanding state and local government's role in affordable living spaces that retains and attracts people to the state and promotes community sustainability.
- Access to quality affordable healthcare for all people, including Medicaid expansion, which will also serve as an important economic driver to the entire state's economy.
- Improve cooperation and respect with Native Americans/Tribal Nations, directed toward promoting their sovereignty and autonomy in a full range of their economic and tourism development.
- Expand investment in infrastructure, including but not limited to: broadband/telecommunications, clean energy, and transportation.
- Use and promote innovative South Dakota-based research to improve the state economy, especially in smaller towns and rural regions.
- Increase promotion of year-round recreational, natural, historic, artistic, and cultural tourism in regional, national, and international markets.
- Development and expansion of interstate and international business and trade on behalf of South Dakota producers and exporters.
- Training programs, tax breaks, grants, and loans which enable small businesses and entrepreneurs to establish and thrive.
- Opportunity zones that promote investment in low-income areas by deferring taxes



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- To support the legalization and sale of recreational cannabis in order to promote tourism and economic development throughout the state of South Dakota.



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Education

The people of South Dakota have the right to a quality public education as enshrined in the South Dakota Constitution. Investing in life-long education is crucial to our democracy and our state's economic development.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- A strong system of public education from early learning through adult education, providing equal educational opportunities which includes a broad curriculum of liberal arts, STEAM, social issues, vocational, and physical education.
- Public education funding that is competitive with neighboring states at all levels, with taxpayer dollars staying within the public education system.
- State funding for strong public early childhood education programs for all school districts that create a solid foundation for life-long learning and success.
- High standards for teachers and education support professionals, ample opportunities for professional development, and regionally-competitive compensation commensurate to the responsibilities entrusted to them.
- The right to due process and collective bargaining with binding arbitration if an impasse occurs during negotiations for all employees of public education.
- Academic freedom, student and faculty rights, and church/state separation in public school curriculum and funding.
- Equal rights and treatment regardless of race, ethnicity, native language, socioeconomic status, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability levels for all students and employees.
- Respect all cultures, religions, and languages across all levels of our public education system, including implementation of the Oceti Sakowin standards.
- Promotion, access to, and funding of special services in South Dakota schools, including special education and other federally mandated programs to provide equitable education for all students.



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- Access to equipment, technology, and support necessary to ensure academic success for in person or online learning for all students in South Dakota.
- Access to professional mental and physical health services for faculty and students, including trauma informed practices across all levels of public education.
- Higher education institutions, including technical colleges, that are affordable, both in terms of tuition and other associated costs for all students regardless of socioeconomic status.
- Restoring and enhancing resources meant to create inclusive excellence in institutions of higher education, and in that, the re-establishment of adequately-funded diversity offices upon all regental university campuses.
- Investing in research and scholarship programs for higher education institutions including the Opportunity Scholarship Program, Build Dakota Scholarship, and South Dakota Freedom Scholarship.
- Funding of school lunches for Pre-K to 12, including the summer food program.
- Teaching accurate, peer-reviewed climate education at all education levels.



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Health & Human Services

The healthcare of all South Dakotans is critical to the safety and economy of the state. Like clean air, water, and food security, access to healthcare is a fundamental right regardless of geography or financial means. South Dakotans should have access to high quality and evidence-based healthcare.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- Expanding Medicaid in South Dakota.
- Nationally funded, community-based comprehensive and affordable healthcare for all, with particular emphasis on underserved and vulnerable populations.
- Publicly led health initiatives throughout the life cycle including preventive medicine, health monitoring research, and disease control and prevention.
- Adequate provision for the needs of physically, mentally or emotionally challenged persons, including in-home services, community support providers, and institutional care services.
- Preventative, trauma-informed mental health and substance abuse treatment programs and services that provide equal access, continuity of care, and protection of patient rights across inpatient, outpatient, urgent care, rehabilitation, residential, school, and primary care settings.
- Programs and funding to ensure access to prenatal delivery and postpartum care as well as safe, legal, and affordable contraception, fertility services, STI testing, other preconception services and abortion, regardless of age or income.
- Expedited research funding for infectious diseases and social factors that determine health, and care for the afflicted.
- Prescription services, dental, vision, and hearing benefits.
- Private and public funding for trained emotional or physical service animals in home, community-based settings, or the workplace.



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- Support of infrastructure and workforce development and retention to meet healthcare needs, including inpatient, outpatient, and ambulance and emergency services.
- Improved coverage and access to telehealth and web-based health care.
- Gender-affirming treatment, with informed consent, for people of all genders and provider training in best practices for LGBTQIA2S+ patients.
- Addressing the worsening shortage of prehospital care and closure of ambulance services.
- Birth to Five services for children to ensure their healthy start in life and continued development.
- Full legalized use of medical cannabis for a patient working with a qualified medical professional at doses needed to alleviate patient conditions. Furthermore, monitor and enact laws that support legal medical cannabis use, and to work with all stakeholders to address and remove barriers for medical cannabis use.
- Protecting patients by using the full authority of the Division of Insurance to reduce care delays caused by unnecessary insurance procedures, improve transparency in cost of care, and ensure coverage of services mandated by statute.
- Access to comprehensive healthcare for those who have transportation or mobility limitations such as residents of long term care facilities or incarcerated persons.
- Measures to improve access to senior housing, long term, and skilled nursing care, including removing the moratorium on new nursing homes.



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Human Rights

The South Dakota Democratic party believes in the inherent rights and dignity of each human and the equitable treatment of all.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- The equitable treatment of people regardless of age, culture, disability, education level, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, immigration, marital, native language, race, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic, or veteran status.
- Making sure that people are able to participate and engage with civic or social events, through mobility access, hearing and visual impairment strategies, language, medical, and socioeconomic accessibility and resources.
- Efforts to eliminate the abuse of power including, but not limited to, physical, emotional, and mental abuse at any level and all forms and hold law enforcement, public safety personnel, government officials, educators, healthcare providers, and the Board of Regents accountable.
- Striving toward the elimination of systemic injustice and discrimination in education, healthcare, workforce, and housing.
- Accessible and affordable housing.
- Food accessibility and security.
- The acceptance and welcoming of immigrants and refugees.
- The support of the Hands Off Our Bodies Movement and the removal of governmental regulation on transgender healthcare.
- The protection, welcoming, love, and support of LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirited people.
- The separation of church and state. Therefore, we respect individual conscience and we will not allow religious ideology to infringe on one's basic human rights.



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Labor & Employment

The South Dakota Democratic Party is committed to improving the lives of South Dakota's workers and their families through policies that promote full employment, good wages & benefits, union participation, and equal treatment in the workplace.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- Improvement in wages and benefits, regardless of full-time, part-time, or seasonal employment status, with a living minimum wage of \$15 per hour indexed to inflation.
- Eliminate exemptions to the minimum wage for individuals receiving subminimum wage.
- Continued efforts towards equal pay for equal work for all workers and eliminating wage collusion.
- The right of workers to organize and collectively bargain, eliminating "Right-to-Work" laws.
- Creation of a long-term infrastructure modernization plan, such as expansion of broadband internet to the door to increase investment, productivity, living standards, and wages for all workers.
- The rights of South Dakota employees/workers to participate in all aspects of the political process without employer intimidation or retribution.
- Paid family medical leave (FMLA) for all workers.
- Paid parental leave for twelve weeks, including adoptive, biological, and foster parents.
- Legislation to ensure that pregnant and nursing mothers have appropriate workplace accommodations without fear of harassment or discrimination.
- Fair, impartial, and expeditious consideration of claims by the South Dakota Department of Labor
- The encouragement of progressive participation in state and local boards and commissions regarding South Dakota Labor Policy.
- Safe, accessible, and affordable childcare for all South Dakota workers.



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- Policies that promote and protect wage transparency, for both exempt and nonexempt employees, an effort to reduce wage disparity.
- We support labor unions as they protect and empower our workforce. The South Dakota Democratic Party recognizes their historical contribution to laying the foundation of today's worker's rights.
- We support the \$124 million South Dakota will receive from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This act, brought forth by Congressional Democrats and signed by President Biden will improve public transportation options and infrastructure across the state.



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Natural Resources & Environment

The South Dakota Democratic Party recognizes that protection of our water, air, land, and other natural resources is both essential and beneficial to responsible economic development and our quality of life. Our natural resources must be protected for present and future generations.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- Recognition of the effects of human caused climate change and a commitment to utilizing the United Nations IPCC report and findings.
- Effective recycling, waste reduction, and replacing single use plastics with biodegradable products.
- The protection of sacred sites designated by collaborative efforts of Tribal and State Historic Preservation Offices.
- Environmental education at all levels in our schools and communities to encourage transformation to a sustainable future.
- The production and distribution of safe, clean, renewable energy that greatly reduces or eliminates CO2 emissions into our atmosphere.
- Net metering for any and all utility customers who produce renewable energy.
- The protection of our ground and surface water.
- The development of electric vehicle infrastructure to include personal, agricultural and industrial applications.
- Enhanced outdoor recreation, including access to public hunting and fishing opportunities and conservation of state wildlife resources.
- Conservation districts and the use of their services for the development of each community's natural resources.
- Reform of federal mining law to protect national forest lands and water resources.
- The elimination of all large-scale fossil fuel pipelines, fracking and industrial-scale mining.
- Fully informed community participation in any public hearing or administrative decision-making which affects citizens, the environment or natural resources.



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- Strengthening and strict enforcement of State and Federal environmental laws.
- The prevention of the use of eminent domain for the transport, extraction, or disposal of fossil fuels.
- The prevention of the use of eminent domain by ventures for the purpose of CO2 pipelines.
- Ecologically sustainable conservation programs that promote natural biodiversity control and the elimination of bounty hunting programs targeting predator species



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Senior Citizens

South Dakota seniors deserve the right to live with dignity and be treated with respect. They experience unique circumstances that require specific solutions, such as addressing the cost of long term care, finding affordable housing that accommodates their needs, and ensuring a quality of life reflective of a lifetime of hard work and continued contribution to society.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- Contagious disease control testing, screening, and comprehensive contact tracing for South Dakotans, especially vulnerable populations.
- Re-establishment of the federal Global Health Security and Biodefense unit to develop pandemic preparedness plans.
- Increased funding for Medicaid providers and expanded access to affordable prescription drugs.
- Establishment of a public long term care insurance system to guarantee all South Dakotans the right to receive long term care at an affordable cost.
- Encourage financial sustainability through rebasing the costs of nursing homes to prevent closures and receive care in local communities.
- Advocate to expand on flexible and affordable long term housing options.
- The fair and impartial treatment of seniors by state agencies charged with the duty of providing services to them, including the vigorous enforcement of ADA building codes.
- Enforcement and promotion of laws and services that protect seniors from consumer fraud, identity theft, and elder abuse.
- Promotion of medical, government, financial literacy, and property tax relief programs for seniors.
- Adequate funding and promotion of senior nutrition programs.
- A living will and advance directive registry available for all residents.
- The right to end-of-life decisions which includes a person's right to die.



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- Establishment of a state-managed retirement fund with auto-enrollment available for employers and their employees who do not receive a retirement benefit as a part of their work.
- The right to work without age discrimination.

State & Local Government

The South Dakota Democratic Party believes in equitable taxation, state budgets which reflect the priorities of South Dakota, and government operations that are open and participatory.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- A fair and equitable tax system for all South Dakotans.
- Appropriate oversight mechanisms to keep public officials at all levels of government accountable.
- Ethical standards and conflict-of-interest rules, including anti-nepotism rules, for government officials.
- Transparency in all levels of government.
- A secure electronic voter registration process, as well as same-day voter registration.
- Access to voting for all eligible South Dakotans, whether voting in-person, early, or by absentee ballot.
- An independent non-partisan redistricting commission.
- Cooperation and coordination between all levels of government.
- Improving and maintaining state and local infrastructure.
- Increasing investment in cultural institutions and the arts in South Dakota.
- The protection of the referral and initiated measure processes.
- Elected public officials respecting the will of the voters in the referral and initiated measure processes.
- The protection of free expression, including peaceful assembly



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Tribal & Native American Issues

The SDDP recognizes the inherent sovereignty of the people and Tribal Nations of the Oceti Sakowin, the original inhabitants of this land. The Lakota, Dakota, Nakota (LDN) people reside in nine tribal government nations, cities, and towns throughout South Dakota.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- The honoring of the treaties and commitments/obligations which provide access to equitable healthcare, education, housing, and nutrition.
- Good faith and transparency in the stewardship of state-administered resources intended for tribal people, communities, and nations.
- The affirming of tribal governments' authority to self-govern their lands, natural resources, both terrestrial and aquatic, and members.
- Regular, meaningful, and fair consultation between tribal, state, and federal officials. Consultation must be a central element of all actions concerning tribal, state, and federal interests.
- Acknowledgment that Oceti Sakowin history is South Dakota history.
- A vigorous education model for all students that teaches an accurate representation of the Oceti Sakowin people, language, culture, and practices, including the effects of historical trauma.
- Native language and cultural practice preservation, use, and revitalization in all communities in South Dakota, including ceremonies.
- A fully funded healthcare system in Tribal Nations that fully realizes policies that provide preventative care and contribute to long and healthy lives.
- Food sovereignty for appropriate nutrition based on cultural identity among the Oceti Sakowin people.



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- Financial support for Native American students graduating from high schools and colleges and support for Native American student organizations.
- Training and hiring Native American faculty and staff at schools at all levels. The system as a whole needs to be more inclusive and conducive to the recruitment and retention of Native American faculty and staff.
- Ease of access to voting, including registration, voting centers, and absentee ballots. In a time when federal voting rights protections are being chipped away in the courts, we still advocate for policies that provide access to registration and voting for Native Americans and the right to have all votes counted.
- Inclusion of tribal census and/or enrollment data in redistricting.
- Critical infrastructure development and maintenance on Reservations include broadband access, roads and bridges, affordable housing, and quality drinking water.
- Sustained funding and education to minimize domestic violence, prevent missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and people, and track those lost.
- Increased funding and training for public safety officers that patrol tribal lands, including Indian Law training for all South Dakota law enforcement and other members of the criminal justice system, especially de-escalation and mental health crisis response training, training to reduce the use of force, and racial profiling, and to reduce the proportion of Native Americans in the South Dakota prison system.
- High-quality, preventative, and adequate medical and mental health care for incarcerated Native American people in state and federal institutions.
- Sustained economic investment and development.
- The acknowledgment of the existence of boarding schools and the generational trauma and related adverse childhood experiences generated by these schools; the establishment of a state monument to remember children lost; and the repatriation of remains of children to tribal nations.



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- Our children are sacred, and we affirm that Oceti Sakowin people have jurisdiction over the placement of Native American children in the foster care system.

Veterans & Military Affairs

The South Dakota Democratic party is proud of our military as the best-trained and equipped force in the world. Members of our military must be ready to meet the new threats of the 21st century. As our veterans have met the threats of the past, we honor their service and sacrifice, and believe they deserve efficient and compassionate lifelong care. We advocate for their physical and emotional well-being as well as their economic security.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- Outreach to all veterans concerning health care and educational services.
- Quality services for mental health treatment, suicide prevention, substance abuse, PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), and traumatic brain injury.
- Recognition and treatment for exposure to toxic chemicals (such as Agent Orange and Burn Pits).
- Funding transportation to medical services for veterans from rural and urban areas, in cooperation with Disabled American Veterans, Tribal services, or other options.
- Training for law enforcement and health care professionals on how to recognize and approach veterans with PTSD and/or traumatic brain injury.
- Educational and training benefits, such as reduced cost and tuition reimbursement.



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- Education of employers and leaders on how veterans' skills can be transferred into civilian employment opportunities, leading to improved employment.
- Improved medical and mental health services for women veterans, particularly pertaining to gender.
- Funding for veteran support when funding is appropriated for conflicts or wars.
- The modernization of the Veterans Administration so the services are more responsive and include alternative therapies.
- Expand VA programmes to all military members who have served and retaining VA medical facilities in the state of South Dakota.
- Expand initiatives to reduce the rate of suicide and increase resilience among veterans and military members.
- Protecting service members' economic opportunities as they transition in and out of military service.



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Women's Issues

Women's rights are human rights, and we all prosper when we actively promote the principles of dignity, self-determination, equal opportunity, justice, and quality of life for all.

The South Dakota Democratic Party advocates for:

- Women of all races, backgrounds, creeds, identities, and ages regardless of citizenship and immigration status.
- Contraceptive research, privacy of reproductive healthcare, comprehensive family life education, and policies that support healthy child bearing and rearing.
- Reproductive freedom and professional medical privacy regarding access to education, information, advice, referral and care.
- The right of people who can become pregnant to make medical decisions for their own bodies.
- Ratification and adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment.
- The right for women to live free from violence and harassment in their personal and professional lives, and the promotion of healing, justice and safety.
- Policy and programs that support families as they care for children, parents, and other family members through all stages of life.
- Candidates who reflect the diversity and breadth of experience of all South Dakotans.