

# **2020 – 2024 West Virginia Republican Party Platform**

Adopted by the West Virginia Republican Party State Executive Committee on June 20, 2020 in Flatwoods, West Virginia

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### **PRINCIPLES**

Understanding the rapid nature of changing needs, we recognize that specific legislative proposals will come and go. We believe the merit of future legislation, policy and candidates should be judged against the philosophy of the Republican Party as expressed by this Platform.

We, the West Virginia Republican Party, believe that a person's individual rights come from God and the right to govern is loaned to the government by the people. The Declaration of Independence states unequivocally that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." The Republican Party is the party of traditional American values: strong national defense, personal responsibility, support for law enforcement and the rule of law, fiscal restraint, economic freedom, free enterprise, and traditional family values.

Keeping with these principles, we hold the following ideals as part of our core platform:

1. Government exists to serve the people and by the consent of the governed, people are the ultimate checks and balances to keep a government accountable to the people.
2. The best process to promote prosperity is to unleash the power of the people within a free market economy.
3. Through good stewardship of our natural resources, West Virginia can become a leader in our nation's energy independence.
4. Healthcare should be patient controlled within a free market system.
5. Education is one of the cornerstones of a society and the best education is one that is student centered and not centered on an ever expanding bureaucracy that only supports itself.

6. The purpose of any government financial support program should be to make itself obsolete by lifting up and enabling people to be self-sufficient.
7. The West Virginia Constitution says it best, "A person has the right to keep and bear arms for the defense of self, family, home and state, and for lawful hunting and recreational use." There should be no misunderstandings here.
8. Republicans believe in traditional marriage, the right to life, traditional family values, and a good quality of life.
9. We honor and support our first responders and military.
10. We want elections that are clean, fair, and above reproach.

**I. REFORMING THE GOVERNMENT TO SERVE THE PEOPLE:** The West Virginia Republican Party believes that governments exist to serve and protect the interests of the individual, without compromising the rights of life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness. We believe that smaller, more accountable and fiscally responsible state and local governments will better serve the citizens of West Virginia. We believe that Government should not grow beyond the growth in population and the rate of inflation, and that budget surpluses should be returned to the taxpayers who have paid them with a simplified and modernized tax system fair to all. Further, we support returning local control to all levels of government when constitutional.

The Republican Party supports:

- Elimination of unnecessary regulations along with the streamlining of bureaucratic positions and departments.
- Increasing voters' rights by establishing Initiative, Referendum and Recall at all levels of government.
- Maintaining roll call voting on bills in the House and Senate, and extending this process to committee votes for increased accountability.
- Requiring that testimony given before legislative committees be made under oath.
- Broadcasting the regular sessions of the legislature and posting on the internet in a timely manner, along with written committee reports on bills.
- Changing the State Code and/or Constitution to provide for immediate Legislative review and possible nullification of any emergency Executive Orders that deprive the citizens or organizations of their rights as guaranteed by the United States and/or West Virginia Constitutions.
- Implementing additional tort reform measures directed at reducing lawsuit abuse with a focus on individual responsibility. We also support loser pays.
- The creation of an intermediate court of appeals to help guarantee the right to an appeal for all.
- Eliminating unfunded state mandates and opposing unfunded federal mandates which shift responsibility to lower levels of government without adequate funding.
- Strengthening of ethics legislation and the additional empowerment of the West Virginia Ethics Commission, including the aggressive pursuit of public officials using public funds for self-promotion and personal gain.
- Prohibiting state public officials including key governor's staff, cabinet and department heads and members of the Board of Public Works from lobbying the West Virginia legislature and administration for two years following departure from their position.
- Providing safe working conditions for public employees and fostering cooperation between public bodies and their employees.
- Providing for legislative reapportionment with 100 single-member House of Delegate districts and 34 separate State Senatorial districts that respect community boundaries and geographical continuity for increased accountability.

- Changing state law to prohibit essential public service employees from striking during collective bargaining.
- Maintaining English as the official language of West Virginia for conducting government business to minimize taxpayer expense.
- Elimination of state subsidies for all gambling related activities.
- Enacting a freeze on all new state government spending until such time as an open and transparent audit of all state government offices and programs can be completed as a way to eliminate wasteful spending, duplicative programs, and prioritizing the service the state should provide.
- Rejection of any Global or United Nations authority over our states, country or citizens. We further reject any judicial system based upon any other theological foundation other than our Judeo-Christian tradition, or any legal system other than English common law.
- Maintaining The Electoral College as the essential method for electing the President and Vice President of the United States as enshrined in our Constitution. We oppose the national popular vote interstate compact which would limit the relevance of West Virginia and stifle the voices of conservatives.
- The Rejection of efforts to end the legislative filibuster in the United States Senate.
- Opposition to efforts to pack the federal courts by adding judicial seats in a partisan effort to change the composition of courts and outcome of case law.
- The appointment and confirmation of strict constructionist judges who will interpret the United States Constitution as it was written and with its original intent in mind.
- A re-emphasis on the Tenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution to prevent the federal government from wielding powers over the States in areas not specifically granted and spelled out in the Constitution, thereby rescinding any subjugation of our state's rights to the federal government.
- An Article V Convention of States to limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government and impose congressional term limits.
- An amendment to the United States Constitution allowing for the nullification of any Federal action by a majority vote of 60% of state legislatures.
- Encouraging and promoting the recruitment and retention of first responders, including volunteer firefighters and emergency responders, by providing financial incentives and/or other means, including covering Workers Compensation.

**II. EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY TO PROMOTE PROSPERITY:** We believe that economic growth can best be achieved by unleashing free enterprise, reducing regulations and creating a free-market business environment. This includes developing a climate that encourages business investment, economic diversification and job creation.

To encourage growth of the economy, the Republican Party supports:

- Elimination of the business franchise tax; the business personal property tax on equipment, machinery, vehicles, and inventory in order to promote job growth and foster a friendly business environment to make our state more competitive.
- Policies that emphasize the importance of small businesses as well as corporations in the development of a strong base of employment for our state, with the encouragement and development of individual entrepreneurship.
- We oppose the re-imposition of a state prevailing wage rate law.
- Opposing project labor agreements (union only contracts) being required for local, state or federal contracts within West Virginia and promoting state contract purchasing reform that would require contracts to be limited to a 3% contingency and eliminate any change orders.

- Paycheck protection where no employees can be forced through union dues to support PACs without their consent.
- The requirement of a super majority vote in the Legislature or a vote of the public for all state tax increases.
- Strengthening and enforcing laws to eliminate illegal immigration so as not to take jobs from legal residents of West Virginia and cause an unnecessary drain on West Virginia resources, while holding employers accountable.
- West Virginia's workforce, private and public, having the right to work, regardless of union affiliation, membership, or dues.
- Opposing the death tax in any form.

**III. ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT:** West Virginia is blessed with an abundance of coal, natural gas, and substantial oil along with other carbon-based fuels. We support the responsible promotion, expansion and use of West Virginia's natural resources.

The Republican Party supports:

- The right of the state of West Virginia to self-determine the nature and manner in which we extract and utilize our natural resources for the greater economic good of the state.
- The organized promotion of West Virginia's abundant natural resources and their responsible use.
- Legally challenging the federal efforts to stop all carbon-sourced energy from reaching market. We vehemently oppose the Democrat Party's war on coal. We support developing an energy policy that incorporates all sources of energy, continuing to ensure that federal environmental regulatory agencies do not bankrupt West Virginia. We applaud the efforts and actions of the Trump Administration for their unwavering support of the coal, oil, and natural gas industries in West Virginia as a part of the balance needed for a dynamic, growing national economy.
- Focusing attention on the emerging shale natural gas development and maximizing the involvement of local businesses and workers to capture the economic gain from these activities, including not only resource extraction but downstream 'value added' economic activity that should benefit our citizenry.
- Enforcing clean air and water standards using sound science and common sense.
- Insisting that the EPA use accurate data before requiring the state and West Virginians to spend precious dollars to clean up the Chesapeake Bay without providing specific sources of pollution. We reject federal jurisdiction over ephemeral and intermittent streams and vigorously support the citizens' right to use such streams.
- Respecting all property rights of the landowners and mineral owners. No statute will be enacted that would prohibit free market rate agreements for the owners of the surface or minerals. No statute should be enacted that would establish lease terms between a company and a royalty owner.
- All oil and gas wells having fair and accurate disclosures of all measurements, taxation, and accuracy of payment of royalty and taxation due to the state and royalty owners.
- No enacting of laws by any legislative body that would force our citizens to give up their Constitutional right of a trial by jury of their peers for the settlement of legal disputes.

**IV. HEALTHCARE:**

- Establishing a responsible and sustainable framework for a free market, and a patient-controlled health care system that emphasizes wellness, prevention, early detection, and choice in medical care, including health saving accounts and other private sector solutions. We support repeal of

government health care exchanges and other related legislation in West Virginia, and oppose any Federal encroachment upon our citizens' health care decisions and the nullification thereof.

- Improving accessibility to medical care and allowing more choice with less government control and regulation between physician and patient.
- Refrain by the governor and/or legislators from expanding Medicaid and other federal health care programs.

**V. EDUCATION:** We support an academic, disciplined system of education that restores decision-making authority over public school policies and finances to parents, locally elected school boards and taxpayers, thus relieving and eliminating layers of bureaucracy which obstruct true education. State education dollars should be redirected from a top-heavy bureaucracy to teachers and students where they are needed most. Neighborhood schools should be maintained whenever possible and practical. Education is a constitutionally provided function of state and local government.

The Republican Party Supports:

- Local control of public schools by elected officials representing parents and taxpayers. We support insuring the integrity of academic appointments so that they are made on the basis of academic credentials and qualifications rather than on the basis of political connections.
- An emphasis on basic reading, writing, science, and mathematics along with life skills while challenging students to reach their potential in areas that will prepare them for the future. We further affirm our commitment to improve early childhood reading proficiency in all fifty-five counties.
- No social promotion of students who have not acquired the basic academic skills.
- Balanced funding for special education as well as full funding for services, staffing and Title 19 Waiver Programs for the disabled.
- The right of all parents and/or legal guardians to choose the most appropriate education for their children, including the traditional public education, charter schools, home schooling, private and/or religious education. We support providing a mechanism for greater flexibility for county boards of education.
- Homeschooling families and their students by respecting their efforts and financial sacrifices. We support homeschooling students being permitted to participate in extracurricular activities in public schools.
- Providing state education funding that follows the student or tax credits to promote choice in education.
- The strengthening of higher education, adult, community, and technical education, and the authority of the local governing boards. We support the expansion of community colleges to continue the improvement in the college attendance rate of West Virginia high school graduates, and we support the Promise Scholarship.
- A higher education system, insulated from political influence, that promotes intellectual diversity while defending the rights of faculty and students to be treated fairly regardless of their political or religious beliefs.
- A school system that guarantees students a minimum of the equivalent of 180 days of classroom instruction that can be managed by local school boards.
- Advising parents in advance of any new or controversial programs in the schools, and giving them the option to participate or not without penalty to the student. We adamantly oppose Common Core, Next Generation Standards, Smarter Balanced Assessment, or any standards that are brought forth from federal regulators. Furthermore, we believe West Virginia academic standards should be developed by West Virginia educators and parents.

- County education systems that require all students to be taught U.S. History, Civics, and Government, and all pertinent documents including the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and the Federalist Papers.
- The yearly auditing of all public school districts for efficient and transparent use of state funds.

**VI. PROMOTING FINANCIALLY STABLE FAMILIES:** The number of people depending on government assistance must be reduced by promoting self-sufficiency.

The Republican Party Supports:

- Strengthening families and recognizing them as the foundation of our representative society.
- That in government buildings, including schools and school-related activities, individuals may only participate on sports teams and use restrooms, locker rooms and changing facilities that correspond to their genetic sex.
- Reduction of the number of people depending on government assistance by promoting self-sufficiency.
- Moving West Virginians who are able from welfare to work as quickly as possible, putting all people on a path of employment and independence. We also support welfare guidelines with accountability, including drug testing and rehabilitation for those on public assistance, as a pathway to self-sufficiency.
- Holding parents responsible for their children, ensuring that both parents fulfill the most basic financial obligations, including locating parents nationwide who are deficient in their financial obligations.
- Eliminating the state income tax on retirement income for senior citizens and eliminating the double taxation on rental property.
- Shared parenting initiatives, putting children first in custody hearings, and with parents having the liberty to direct the care and upbringing of their children as a fundamental right.
- Creating a legal protection to prevent a parent or other guardian from unfairly leaving the state with a child or children and providing remedies, if such action takes place, to ensure that all parents are able to have reasonable contact with the children in addition to providing financial support.
- Committing to explore all current and emerging techniques to combat the raging drug abuse epidemic and the related issues that stem from that blight.

**VII. SUPPORTING THE RIGHT TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS AND INCREASING SECURITY IN OUR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES:** We are fortunate to live in a state with one of the lowest crime rates in the nation. We believe in strictly upholding gun ownership rights and enforcing the existing laws when crimes have been committed. We oppose any attempt to limit the purchase, manufacture or ownership of firearms and ammunition by law abiding citizens.

The Republican Party Supports:

- The promotion and protection of the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution to ensure the right of self-defense, liberty and freedom for all Americans as also spelled out in the West Virginia Constitution. (“A person has the right to keep and bear arms for the defense of self, family, home and state, and for lawful hunting and recreational use.” Ratified November 4, 1986.)
- A ban on punitive government lawsuits against manufacturers and dealers of firearms and other legal products and stopping harassment of gun dealers because of technical paperwork errors. We oppose forced closing of gun stores by state and local governments during emergencies.

- Concealed weapon permit laws with reciprocal agreements with other states; and authorization to carry on college campuses, court houses, and the Capital complex outside the Supreme Court area.
- The Castle Doctrine, which allows homeowners to defend their persons, families, and property in their own homes.
- The opposition of so-called “Red flag laws.”
- The imposition of mandatory minimum sentencing for the use of a weapon during the commission of a violent crime, and the reforming of mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent offenders.
- Reinstatement of the death penalty for heinous crimes where the identity of the perpetrator is not an issue, where the guilt of a person is established beyond a reasonable doubt, including with DNA testing or other evidence.
- Fair and just punishment for the commission of violent crimes, including life without the possibility of parole.
- Revision of the Criminal Code for consistency and uniformity, including that dealing with mandatory sentencing guidelines, plea bargaining and parole.
- A requirement that criminals pay restitution to their victims, in addition to criminal sentencing, earning the money through supervised work.
- Tougher juvenile laws, coupled with more effective enforcement of violent offenders and parental responsibilities, including trying juveniles as adults in serious felony cases.
- Affirming support of our constitutional right of due process.
- Allowing teachers who volunteer and go through training and certification to be armed in our public schools to defend our children.

**VIII. AFFIRMATION OF THE INSTITUTION OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE, THE RIGHT TO LIFE, TRADITIONAL FAMILY VALUES, AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE:** We affirm the institution of traditional marriage between one man and one woman, the right to life, traditional family values, and a good quality of life.

- We believe that any unborn child has a fundamental, individual right to life that begins at conception, and must be protected. We oppose infanticide, and the trade and sale of baby body parts. We also adamantly support the ban on partial birth abortion.
- We vigorously oppose any use of public funds for abortion. We commend the efforts of those individuals and religious or private organizations that are providing alternatives to abortion, including tax relief for adoption by traditional families.
- We reaffirm our support for the election and appointment of judges at all levels of the judiciary who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life.
- We believe that senior citizens have the right to remain independent and to be treated equally in all matters. We support policies that protect the rights of our senior citizens to live full and productive lives and to age with dignity. We support property tax relief for senior citizens to offset the effect inflation has had on the homestead exemption.
- We believe that America is founded on Judeo-Christian principles, which include the idea that every individual has the right to worship or engage in religious expression according to the dictates of his or her own conscience. We affirm the constitutional right of all individuals to worship or engage in religious expression in the religion of their choice.
- We revere the symbols of our American Heritage and understand that the Ten Commandments are the basis for our basic freedoms and the cornerstone of Western legal tradition. We oppose any governmental action to restrict, prohibit, or remove any public display of our foundational documents or religious symbols.

- We support the sanctity of the pulpit and oppose any attempt to criminalize or stigmatize messages based upon sincerely held religious beliefs. The tax-exempt status of a church or house of worship should never be threatened because of the content of their sermons or policy positions of their bodies.
- We believe in protection for individuals, churches, religious organizations, ministries, and private businesses from being compelled to perform or participate in any same sex marriage, same sex civil unions, or similar ceremony, including but not limited to being compelled to grant access to their equipment and facilities for the same purpose.
- We oppose the creation of additional protected classes.
- We support the adoption of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act in West Virginia that requires that government shall not burden a person's exercise of religion even if the burden results from a rule of a general applicability, including an exception if such regulation is necessary for the furtherance of a compelling government interest and that the rule must be the least restrictive manner in which to further the government interest.
- The compassion of West Virginia Mountaineers is best extended through community and faith-based organizations. We urge all West Virginians to support and become involved in such activities in their communities.

**IX. SUPPORTING OUR HEROES, MILITARY AND VETERANS:** The State of West Virginia has the highest per capita number of veterans in the United States. Her citizens have suffered the highest casualty rate in the last four wars and have been awarded the highest per capita number of Medals of Honor. We fully support our veterans and active duty personnel and honor their service.

In recognition of those Mountaineers who have served their country, the Republican Party supports:

- Exempting Reserve and National Guard military pay from West Virginia taxation.
- The further development of West Virginia's veterans' hospitals and facilities, including training and assistance programs emphasizing care for returning service members and those with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- Encouraging, through vigorous statewide educational promotion, more West Virginia students to apply for entrance to our Nation's service academies.
- The ability of active duty, reserve, or National Guard to carry loaded firearms anywhere in West Virginia.

**X. CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS:** We support campaigns and elections which are clean, fair and above reproach. In order for the people to have confidence, trust and faith in our government, West Virginia government must be truly of the people, by the people and for the people. The purpose of the United States Constitution is to limit power of the federal government, not the American people.

Therefore, the Republican Party supports:

- Clarifying and enforcing our election laws to the fullest extent, ensuring the security of ballots and ballot boxes, offering updated, practical training for poll workers, providing adequate compensation for poll workers and changing state election law to allow independent observers to ensure free, fair and clean elections. We also support a mandate that all counties follow Federal Election Law regarding maintenance of poll books.
- Vehemently rejecting efforts to move from an in-person election on Election Day to a vote by mail system.



- Healthy, positive, one-on-one debates as the best vehicle to discuss issues with the people during an election season. We strongly encourage a series of debates among all candidates for all elected offices.
- Elections which are clean, fair, and above reproach. Voter rolls must be kept up to date, with those who have not voted in two election cycles or have relocated or died purged from the voting rolls on an annual basis.
- The elimination of the practices of vote-buying, corruption and undue political influence - too often prevalent in our history. When the outcome of an election is decided by less than 0.2 percent a recount at public expense may be requested.
- The current registration law which closes three weeks before an election. In as much as the Republican Party is opposed to voter fraud, we oppose same day voter registration, as County Clerks need an adequate period of time to verify the authenticity of the voter and the voter's address.
- Photo voter ID requirements to increase the integrity of the voting process, and the authorization of poll workers to ask which party ballot independent voters may wish to receive. For those who cannot afford a state photo ID, a free state photo ID shall be provided.
- Having all special elections, including bond and levy elections, conducted during regularly scheduled primary and general election dates.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Republican Party is guided by historic maxims: constitutionally limited government, fiscal responsibility, accountability of elected officials, and economic liberty. To these ends the Republican Party has worked to improve our state and implemented positive changes for our citizens with the cooperation of the Legislature. Initiatives have been launched to strengthen West Virginia families, educate children and develop the economy, so that young West Virginians can remain in their home state. The principles of the Republican Party have worked for over a century in the United States and around the world. As we face the challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we know these principles work in West Virginia, and with a united effort we will complete our mission.

## **APPENDIX A - ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This 2020 West Virginia Republican Party Platform is a grassroots document and represents the views and priorities of Republicans from across our state. Our Resolution Committee reached out to members of the State Republican Executive Committee in all counties and regions to receive the input of all Republicans. Our Committee spent many hours and several months gathering and considering the suggestions and recommendations to update the platform to 2020 issues and challenges. We feel this document represents the views of Republicans across our state and most West Virginians in general. I would like to thank the Committee members for their participation and insight as well as members of the Republican Party in West Virginia, WVGOP Chairwoman Melody Potter, and WVGOP Executive Director Byron Fisher.

**Resolution Committee Members:** John Overington Chairman , Anne B. Dandeleit, Gary Dungan, Donna Holstine, Laura Kennedy, Phillips Kolsun, Gladys Lemley, Kevin Poe and Doug D. Smith.