



Connecticut Democratic Party Party Platform

Revised 2022

Preamble: An Inclusive and Resilient Democracy

Connecticut Democrats have led the state through a historic pandemic, keeping our families safe and helping our economy survive through unprecedented times. We have been able to do this by being committed to upholding our values, to preserving our democracy, and to governing with compassion, empathy, and a commitment to equality for all.

In the face of unprecedented attacks on our democracy, we believe in upholding the U.S. Constitution, preserving American Democracy, ensuring free and fair elections, and protecting the sanctity of voting.

We believe in the equality of all people, regardless of race, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender and personal identity, citizenship, or any other differentiating factor. We believe in every person's inalienable right to be who they are, marry who they want, and raise their families according to their values.

As Democrats, we believe that a rising tide lifts all boats, and that continuing to build an economy that benefits everyone needs to be one of Connecticut's top priorities. Toward this end, we will continue our work to eliminate wage gaps, ensure equal pay for equal work, and support workers and their right to organize in the workplace. Labor organizations are vital to growing our middle class, and central to maintaining fairness, ensuring wage equity, and fighting against workplace discrimination.

We are committed to supporting and advancing women's rights, we also believe that abortion is health care and unequivocally support a woman's right to choose safe and legal abortion.

As diverse as we may be as individuals, we Democrats are also united in our beliefs that:

- A more equitable tax system needs to be established, so that everyone pays their fair share.
- Health care is a right, and we believe in universal, affordable health care for all.

- We need to continue to work toward greater equity in education, so that every Connecticut child receives an equally high-quality education, no matter where they live.
- Climate change is an existential threat, and that we must urgently, proactively, and aggressively work together to protect our future.
- We must work to both keep our communities safe and build a better criminal justice system that is trusted by all citizens.
- Every Connecticut citizen deserves access to affordable housing.
- For a healthy democracy to thrive, all voices must be heard.

Education

High-quality public education not only provides a foundation for both academic achievement and good citizenship, it also drives prosperity. As Democrats, we believe it is the state and national governments' responsibility to ensure that every child can receive the high-quality public education that will allow them to lead meaningful lives, no matter their race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, religion, disability status, language status, immigration or citizenship status, household income, zip code, or any other differentiating factor.

Toward this end, Connecticut Democrats believe we are obligated to address the economic and racial funding gaps that have negatively impacted students for too long. We must continue to close the existing opportunity gap by creating a funding system that works for every student, as well as making universal pre-kindergarten available to all.

Our students continue to recover from the extraordinary challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is our responsibility to support not just their academic learning, but their social-emotional learning as well. As studies have shown, our students are currently facing mental and behavioral health issues. We understand that unaddressed mental health issues are an obstacle to learning, and continued support for school-based mental and behavioral health staff for both preventive and emergency care is essential.

Connecticut Democrats support the professional experience of educators and educational practices that include, among other things, teaching critical thinking skills, using developmentally and age-appropriate materials, teaching historically accurate information, and teaching in a culturally and racially responsive environment.

Recognizing that Connecticut's businesses and industries provide economic opportunity and require a trained workforce, we are committed to continuing to grow our technical school education system to train residents for good-paying jobs and meet the needs of the industries that call Connecticut home. To do this, we must look at not just the programs needed to provide the most highly trained workforce, but the recruitment of women, people of color, and others who have traditionally been excluded from these good paying, benefit-rich occupations.

Building on the Pledge to Advance CT, we will work toward the ultimate goal of making community colleges and trade schools accessible and tuition free for all, as well as ensuring that students at these and other public higher education institutions can emerge with degrees in hand and unencumbered by a lifetime of debt. We support the goal of making our institutions of higher education models of the nation in teaching, research, and service; institutions that are always working to meet the needs of our rapidly-changing society.

Connecticut Democrats salute the educators, administrators, and all school employees of our state, whose dedication and skills represent the essential elements of educational excellence. We pledge to work collaboratively with teachers, school administrators, parents, and others in developing measures to continuously strengthen public education in every community in the state. We support recruitment and retention of diverse administrators and teachers to provide a diversity of perspectives.

Connecticut's Economy

Economic Vitality: Connecticut Democrats believe that all our citizens have a right to live materially secure lives; it is thus our duty to work for a vibrant economy that gives everyone access to prosperity. To that end, we support:

- A living wage for all, building on our current trajectory to a \$15 minimum wage.
- Tax policy that supports:
 - Small business and economic development
 - A vibrant middle class
 - Smart growth
 - Sound and productive fiscal policies.
- Affordable public higher education accessible to all, including trade and technical schools that prepare students for the good paying, benefit-rich positions Connecticut's traditional and emerging employers need to fill.
- Social and racial equity in emerging markets, including the newly legalized recreational cannabis market.
- Access to housing that is affordable.
- Access to affordable childcare.
- A jobs program for impacted areas and low income youth, with both federal and state funding, to train and place at-risk youth in good-paying jobs.

Labor: Connecticut Democrats believe that when workers are strong, Connecticut is strong. The labor movement is a valued constituency of the Connecticut Democratic Party. Democrats understand that labor unions helped build America's middle class, and organized labor remains critical to fulfilling America's basic bargain: If you work hard and do your part, you should be able to get ahead and stay ahead. We need to strengthen and protect America's workforce.

It was labor unions that led the fight to improve working conditions and labor standards and helped to build the largest middle class in history. Labor unions demonstrate that we are stronger together than as individuals. Emerging business, old business, government, and nonprofit sectors are all driven by our labor force. Connecticut

Democrats know that supporting and protecting labor benefits every aspect of our society. We, without reservation, support workers' right to organize a union without fear or intimidation.

Workers have the right to:

- Fair compensation.
- Comprehensive health and dental insurance.
- Safe work environments.
- Protection from harassment and discrimination.
- Procedures for challenging unfair labor practices.
- A fair and secure retirement.
- The chance to compete for existing work when faced with outsourcing

Strong unions raise the bar to the benefit of non-unionized workers, and are critical to building and expanding the middle class.

Health Care

Everyone should have health insurance and access to affordable medical care, dental care, and behavioral health care – along with needed prescription medications and devices – regardless of income or work status.

Because we believe quality health care is a human right, our duty as Democrats is to provide a single-payer system with complete – rather than patchwork – coverage. This would include comprehensive coverage of all services requiring a healthcare professional, including women's health, mental health, dental health, reproductive health, and transgender health care. The special needs of senior citizens, the LGBTQIA+ community, neurodiverse children and adults, and those suffering from substance misuse and behavioral health conditions must also remain in the forefront.

Environment

Climate change is an existential threat to Connecticut, our nation, and our world. Bold measures right now are required to prevent the destructive weather patterns and mass extinction events currently predicted by research scientists. The U.S. is a leading driver of climate change. Connecticut must be a leader to help mitigate and reverse climate change, plus help drive needed preventive measures..

Connecticut must be a leader in environmental justice, directing resources to areas of the state that have suffered from projects that have hurt local communities' environments.

We are committed to ending our reliance on fossil fuels by increasing renewable energy sources and offering incentives to both households and businesses to adopt wind, solar, heat pumps, geothermal, and other renewable energy technologies. We must also not allow utility companies to disincentivize adoption of solar panels on houses and businesses.

Though strides led by Connecticut Democrats have been made, we must continue to make policy commitments that transition our state toward a clean energy economy at the scale and pace needed to address climate change. These efforts must include creating a much more aggressive Renewable Portfolio Standard that will lead the nation, along with increased investments to modernize the power grid to support the distribution and storage of renewable energy.

Our state should support robust investment in coastal resiliency efforts, as well as in our many other natural resources. The state must take steps to:

- Protect our water by limiting runoff
- Restore wetlands
- Continue to acquire open space and protect watersheds.

Additionally, we must accelerate the protection of farmland and our agricultural heritage. This should include:

- Creating additional financial incentives that encourage private landowners to protect forests and agricultural land
- Promoting and supporting farmers' implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices
- Increasing investments in urban farms and farms run by women and farmers of color.

All public offices should continue to adopt sustainable options, including energy efficient/electric vehicles and office equipment. Consideration should also be given to more sustainable methods of operation, such as transitioning to digital versus paper documents, virtual versus in-person meetings, and incentives for similar changes in the private sector and homes.

Criminal Justice Reform

Connecticut Democrats support a criminal justice system that provides fair and equitable treatment for all. We are committed to actively rooting out the structural racism in our criminal justice system and eliminating racial and economic disparities. We believe reform must incorporate every aspect of the criminal justice system, including what we choose to criminalize; the practices and behavior of law enforcement professionals; charging, sentencing, and bail; treatment of those incarcerated; diversion and rehabilitation; and reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals into society.

As a step toward this essential vision, we support the recent call from state law enforcement for additional professional development for working with individuals with mental, intellectual, or physical disabilities. We support augmenting our police with behavioral health specialists for situations where force and arrest may not be appropriate. We are committed to racial and gender diversification in law enforcement, because it is essential for improved relationships between police officers and the communities they serve.

As national leaders in youth justice reform, we must continue to evaluate developmentally appropriate sentencing laws for youth, with consideration of research and the intersection of trauma and justice-involvement.

We support Connecticut continuing its progress as one of the nation's leaders in reducing its state prison population through reevaluating sentencing laws, expanding compassionate release options, and exploring more alternatives to incarceration.

Public Safety

Connecticut Democrats support and are indebted to the first responders whose mission is to keep our communities safe and are essential members of our communities.

While Connecticut remains one of the safest states in the nation, with a violent crime rate less than half of the national rate, we believe that Connecticut Democrats must continue to lead the way in enacting commonsense proposals focused on protecting our neighborhoods.

Among other initiatives, we support:

- The need to continue to invest in proven crime prevention strategies.
- Programs and policies to promote school retention and graduation to help end the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Community policing strategies where the officers and the community work together as partners.
- Furthering the commitment to fighting the opioid crisis in the state, and holding pharmaceutical companies accountable for the impact on families.

Women's Rights

Connecticut Democrats are committed to ensuring full equality for women. Like the majority of Americans and Connecticut residents, we also unequivocally believe that everyone should be able to access high-quality reproductive health care services, including the choice to have a safe and legal abortion.

As Connecticut Democrats, we are committed to protecting and advancing reproductive rights. We believe sexual and reproductive rights are human rights, and we will always fight to ensure access to the full spectrum of comprehensive healthcare services, especially for people with low-incomes, people of color, LGBTQIA+ people, and those from underserved areas. We are also committed to reestablishing safe birthing centers in communities where labor and delivery units no longer exist.

Connecticut Democrats will fight to end gender discrimination in the areas of education, employment, health care, and any other area of life. We will combat biases across economic, political, and social life that hold women back and limit their opportunities. We also strongly believe in the necessity to continue to:

- Work to end the scourge of domestic violence, including coercive control.

- Affirm our stance to believe and support those who have been sexually assaulted or harassed.
- Identify and prevent situations of exploitation and human trafficking.
- Fight for workplace equity.
- Demand pay equity.
- Support our federal legislators' work to guarantee equal rights for women under the law by making the Equal Rights Amendment part of the U.S. Constitution.
- Elect more women to public office.

We must continue to aggressively confront all forms of violence against women.

Racial Equity

Systemic racism continues to negatively affect the lives of Black, Indigenous, and all people of color living in Connecticut in multiple and multi-faceted ways. Racism is a crisis that affects public health, education, housing, our economy, social and criminal justice, and every other aspect of life. Thus, as Connecticut Democrats, we are committed to dismantling racism through policies and practices that advance racial justice and promote equity.

Policies must rectify these inequities. Without an intentional dismantling of structural racism, a culture and system of racial hierarchy threatens our democracy, and we cannot allow this to continue.

Closely related to these issues is the increase in hatred and violence against ethnic and religious minorities. The Connecticut Democrats stand against the rise in antisemitism, Islamophobia, violence against Asians, discrimination against Hispanic communities, and all other groups facing hatred and violence.

LGBTQIA+ Rights

The LGBTQIA+ community consists of diverse people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, personal identities, and socioeconomic structures. Democrats acknowledge that subgroups within the community have different priorities, and we are committed to ensuring that all members of the LGBTQIA+ community feel safe and thrive in their schools, homes, and workplaces.

Much more needs to be done, especially concerning the safety and mental health of LGBTQIA+ youths and our aging LGBTQIA+ population. We also recognize that our transgender citizens, who are under constant attack, need to be more forthrightly defended.

As Democrats, we are committed to protecting the rights and liberties of LGBTQIA+ constituents and share in their Pride.

Connecticut Democrats are committed to protecting LGBTQIA+ rights and will react to any national policy changes that threaten those rights to ensure Connecticut remains a safe place for LGBTQIA+ people to live and succeed.

Gun Violence Prevention

Connecticut Democrats are proud of our efforts to pass common-sense gun laws, and the investments that are being made to fund evidence-informed, community-centric programs to break cycles of violence that too often involve guns. Together, they make Connecticut a continued leader in preventing gun violence.

Yet while the state has one of the lowest gun death rates in the nation, Connecticut still has an unacceptable level of gun violence, which disproportionately affects communities of color in our largest cities.

Because gun violence is a public health crisis, predictable funding streams, including an ongoing state-level grant-making capacity will ensure the crisis gets the attention needed to save lives. Strong gun laws are necessary, but alone are not enough to address the violence.

Infrastructure, Transportation, and Internet

Connecticut is set to receive a historic \$6 billion from the federal government over the next five years for infrastructure improvements. Understanding the important role a robust transportation system plays in revitalizing our state's economy, Connecticut Democrats believe we must have a forward-looking, comprehensive plan for strategic investments in infrastructure. Expanding alternative modes of transportation, such as rail and busways, is critical to any long-term planning as we work to ease congestion on our highways.

Transforming Connecticut's infrastructure must include stakeholders representing all our communities. It must also consider:

- Opportunities to protect and take advantage of our natural resources and assets.
- Ways to improve our citizens' quality of life, including encouraging e-bike use and creating mass-transit friendly communities.
- More electric vehicle charging stations to help combat climate change.
- Basic infrastructure needed to support new housing development statewide
- A plan for our future economy.

At-cost high-speed internet access available throughout the state will enable us to compete in commerce, business, and education at the highest level and allow for growth and expansion. Our increasingly mobile population requires more public wireless hotspots.

Voting Rights

The need to protect our representative democracy is more urgent than ever, and Connecticut is on the right path toward strengthening the freedom to vote: We expanded automatic voter registration, re-enfranchised parolees, and increased eligibility to vote by absentee ballot. This year, voters will have the opportunity to amend the state constitution to allow for early voting, and the first step has been taken to do the same to allow "no-excuse" absentee voting for all.

We must protect the right to vote. Connecticut Democrats are committed to working to increase voter participation in rural and underrepresented communities. Better statewide outreach to register, educate, mobilize, and turn out voters of all ages is also a priority.

Connecticut Democrats believe a state-based Voting Rights Act is essential to safeguard the rights of protected classes of voters and provide a mechanism for challenging any laws that may infringe upon them.

At the federal level, we support and encourage the passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Act. Here in Connecticut, we support study of the benefits of ranked choice voting.

Immigration

All members of our community, including immigrants and refugees, should be treated equally, with respect and dignity, in their homes, workplaces, and places of worship; within the legal system; and throughout the state. We honor and support the valuable contributions made by immigrants over the years and we welcome refugees. We believe that undocumented immigrants should be afforded every opportunity to achieve permanent status.

Free Press

Connecticut Democrats support Connecticut's free press as a defining hallmark of politics and democracy in our state. The Connecticut press has been a counter-check to power and misinformation, as well as an effective resource to Connecticut's people. We always have – and always will – work to ensure that a free press is sustained, as it is an essential tool to helping preserve our democracy.

Democracy

Connecticut Democrats believe it's more important than ever for residents of all ages to be engaged in the many pressing issues that affect our state today. Every person deserves a voice. And for a healthy democracy to exist, *all voices must be heard and included*. We also believe that the best path to effect needed change is through cooperative, civil discourse. We are blessed to live in Connecticut.

By continuing to work and stand strong together, we can make Connecticut a place where "liberty and justice for all" is not just part of a pledge, but part of our everyday lives.