

# ARKANSAS REPUBLICAN PLATFORM 2014



# PREAMBLE

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We believe the United States Constitution is the foundational framework for our federal government and we will support and defend its precepts. We believe that the Constitution is a literal document and that it is as relevant today as the day it was written.

We will protect and defend the State of Arkansas against usurpation of the State's rights as guaranteed by the Tenth Amendment to the US Constitution and the rights of Arkansas' citizens as guaranteed by the Ninth Amendment to the US Constitution.

We, as members of the Republican Party of Arkansas, believe the Platform expresses the will of the people and provides direction to our elected officials. Therefore, this Platform is our blueprint for government of the people, by the people and for the people based upon the following principles:

- THE POWER OF FAITH IN GOD
- THE SANCTITY OF LIFE
- INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND INITIATIVE
- INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND LIBERTY SECURED BY A LIMITED GOVERNMENT
- PRIVATE PROPERTY
- LOWER TAXES TO PRODUCE ECONOMIC GROWTH
- STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE
- THE PERSONAL RIGHT TO OWN AND BEAR ARMS
- THE EQUAL AND JUST ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAW
- SEPARATE AND EQUAL BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

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The State of Arkansas is truly the land of opportunity with abundant natural resources and proud, hardworking people. Although our state has weathered the recent economic crisis better than states without a balanced-budget requirement, we continue to underperform in economic and per capita personal income growth. As Republicans, we believe that sustainable growth is achieved through fiscally conservative policies of low taxes and free market initiatives. Our vision for Arkansas is dynamic: It is rooted in free enterprise, liberty, economic freedom and the belief that the individual is able to make the right decisions for oneself.

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 provide new opportunities for service sector jobs. We support the Arkansas Department of Economic Development for the purpose

of more effectively attracting good paying jobs to Arkansas, and encouraging 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 in order for small businesses in Arkansas to survive and flourish. We strongly support Legal Reform to improve the environment for business growth and expansion through an amendment to the State Constitution. The education and orientation of our youth in the free enterprise system, with the goal of developing the next generation of business leaders, is also important.

3. We recognize the need for additional emphasis in the area of economic development in underdeveloped communities. Therefore, we support the development of programs to facilitate business development and economic growth for economically distressed areas. We further believe that improving the financial standing of all our citizens will reduce crime and government dependency in Arkansas. We support initiatives that provide business management training, access to capital and procurement assistance to struggling firms. We believe that a strong workforce (equipped with a world competitive primary and secondary education) must undergird these initiatives.

4. We support initiatives to create an "Ownership Society" which encourages an individual's ability to control his or her own resources to invest into entrepreneurial initiatives (i.e., home ownership and individual retirement accounts).

5. As Republicans, we favor free and fair trade with our nation's trading partners around the world. We call on those nations with unfair trading practices to open their borders to the many great products of the state of Arkansas. In the pursuit of free and fair trade, we should never risk losing our nation's sovereignty nor blindly export jobs to other countries. Arkansas waterways, one of the great assets of the State, should play a major role in developing the state's economy. Developing waterway infrastructure will allow us to attract manufacturing, distribution, and value-added companies. Due to our favorable mid-south location, we are poised to become an import/export center for trade between the United States, the Caribbean, and Central and South American markets. We encourage legislative and financial support of the development of the inland waterways and related inter-modal facilities in Arkansas.

6. We strongly support efforts to make Arkansas the destination state for retirees and tourists.

7. Technological advances must be maximized in order for our schools, businesses and farms to prosper.

## BUSINESS AND LABOR

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The economy of our nation and well-being of our citizens depends on a strong work ethic. The individual 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 promotes individual incentives for those wishing to achieve "The American Dream."

1. We believe that no business is too big to fail in a free market.
2. We believe that the cornerstone of Republican philosophy is the belief that each man and 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 society for himself/herself and for his/her family as well as for those unable to care for themselves.
3. 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 support those incentives that enable persons to seek employment on a timely basis, with the goal of becoming self-sufficient. We support drug testing for recipients of unemployment benefits.
4. We believe the business sector can only function properly 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 employer/employee relationship depends upon mutual respect and the ability to work as a cost-effective and productive team.
5. We believe employers have the right to provide employees with relevant information in response to information given to their employees by representatives of labor organizations during attempts to initiate the formation of a union.
6. We believe employees have the right to a secret ballot when determining whether to accept union representation. We oppose all efforts to abandon this long standing practice.
7. We support the state's right-to-work law.
8. We believe it is in the public's best interest that government contracting be performed through full and open free market competition.
9. We believe government over-regulation of business destroys the competitiveness of Arkansas businesses and exports jobs from Arkansas to states

and countries with fewer regulations. It is important that government policies recognize that incentives to work, produce and invest are important keys to our economic future.

## **AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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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 meat, milk, eggs, grains, fiber, and many other staple products. Support of agriculture helps to ensure a safe, wholesome and plentiful food supply. Believing this, we support:

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 incentives for producers to implement effective conservation practices on sensitive lands.
2. Farmers and ranchers having the right to produce agricultural products using diverse production methods and technologies.
3. 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.
4. Protection of private property rights. We call 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 use or benefit.
5. Separating food assistance programs from the farm bill.

## **EDUCATION**

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Article 14 of the Arkansas Constitution requires that “an adequate and efficient system of free public schools shall ever be preserved.” We recognize that although the federal and state governments have spent more and more tax dollars in the public education system, the system often leaves students unprepared to join the work force or attend institutions of higher learning. We believe that all Arkansas children deserve a quality education and that learning should be delivered effectively and efficiently. Recognizing that for a republic to work it must have educated citizens, we offer the following statements:

1. The primary purpose of our educational system is to prepare Arkansas children to become productive citizens of our state.
2. Parents have the responsibility for the education of their children. Our education system should support and encourage that parental role. School choice made possible by scholarships or other funding sources should be implemented across the state. Educational programs should promote a range of choice, to include home schooling, charter schools, private schooling, virtual schools, distance learning programs, and public school choice.
3. School administrations are responsible to ensure the efficient and cost-effective delivery of education.
4. We support efforts to enhance recruitment and retention of highly qualified teachers, and teacher salaries based on performance.
5. We support efforts to control the classroom environment through the establishment of more stringent disciplinary measures and the enforcement of those measures.
6. School mandates should come from the parents, communities, local school boards, and state legislatures, not from the federal government. Legislation and funding should support these goals in order of priority.
7. All students should receive a high-quality curriculum to include reading, writing, mathematics, science, geography, history, economics, civics, arts, computer science, and physical exercise.
8. We support learn-and-earn programs and encouraging students to earn income. We support career and technical educational programs that give students the opportunity to learn and develop skills that will benefit them in future careers.
9. Parental choice, accountability and evaluation of student performance are the keys to reform in education. Common sense values and life skills are the core of good education.
10. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. We support the right of individuals to pray in all public schools.
11. We support Alternative Teacher and Administrator Certification Programs to increase the number of qualified and caring educators in our schools.
12. We support improving the quality and accessibility of literacy education for Arkansans at every stage of life.
13. We strongly support community involvement in all local schools.

## **ELECTION REFORM**

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

To that end, the following are submitted:

1. Election laws must be vigorously enforced to the fullest extent of the law. We strongly encourage aggressive prosecution of these cases.
2. We support efforts to provide assistance to all county election commissioners to train poll workers to perform their duties efficiently and to recognize irregularities in the election process.
3. We support measures that ensure public officials and voters adhere to election laws.
4. We applaud the passage of Act 595, the Voter ID Law, in 2013. We support full enforcement and passage of any language necessary to support the counting of all ballots, including absentee ballots cast by duly registered voters.
5. We support the term limits law as defined in the Arkansas Constitution.
6. We support the Electoral College process as it presently exists and oppose modifications that would alter Arkansas' role in electing the President.
7. We support that non-emergency special elections be held in conjunction with regularly scheduled May and November election dates.
8. We support requiring proof of citizenship when registering to vote.

## **TAX REFORM AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

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Tax Reform begins by electing qualified and trustworthy Republican candidates to office at every level of government to ensure effective and responsible management of our resources.

### **A. State Level**

1. Replace the State Income Tax with a more equitable method of taxation.
2. We support the permanent repeal of death taxes.



3. We support the elimination of the state tax on capital gains.
4. 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 critical needs, thus eliminating most pork barrel projects from state funding.

#### B. National Level

1. We are concerned over the deficit spending prevalent in our federal government; therefore, we support a Balanced Budget Amendment. We call for a complete audit of the Federal Reserve System and an immediate report to the American people. We insist that our elected representatives pursue policies of fiscal restraint, limited government, and lower taxes. This will require substantiated cuts in federal spending, including the elimination of many “earmark” projects and the elimination of some agencies and positions.
2. We support a simpler and more efficient tax code.
3. We believe capital gains taxes have a negative effect on investment activity and thus reduce economic growth.
4. We support reducing the maximum amount of Social Security Income subject to income tax.
5. We support the permanent repeal of death taxes.
6. We oppose any internet sales tax imposed by the federal government.

#### C. In General

1. We are opposed to all unfunded federal and state mandates. We support amending the Arkansas Constitution to make the passage of all tax increases dependent upon approval of three-fourths of the legislature.
2. We support federal and state tax codes that promote marriage and the family. Believing that marriage is a divinely ordained union between one man and one woman, we do not believe that the state or federal tax code should allow individuals in a same-sex union to file a tax return using the filing status of “Married Filing Jointly”.
3. We oppose the imposition of any tax or penalty for the failure or refusal to purchase any product or service.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

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We strongly encourage the Arkansas Board of Corrections, Arkansas Parole and Probation, and Department of Community Corrections to enact changes within our criminal justice system to prioritize public safety that preserves a free and open society where citizens are secure in their persons and property.

All legal proceedings should be conducted and adjudicated based solely on the United States Constitution, the Arkansas Constitution, and the statutory and case law framework of federal and state law, without reference to or influence by any foreign law.

U.S. and Arkansas law requires that juveniles and adult offenders be held separately. We support juvenile programs to encourage reform that are appropriate to the age of the juvenile offender and the crime(s) that are the basis of his or her conviction(s) in addition to serving a term of confinement.

Crime victims must have a voice throughout the criminal justice process. Crime victim rights must be incorporated into our system and honored by law enforcement, the judiciary and prosecutors. Crime victims must be afforded a way to enforce their rights.

These rights must include:

1. The right of a crime victim to be treated with fairness and respect for his or her privacy and dignity, and to be free from intimidation, harassment and abuse, throughout the criminal justice process.
2. The right to be reasonably protected from the defendant and persons acting on behalf of the defendant.
3. The right to have the safety of the victim and the victim's family considered in fixing the amount of bail and release conditions for the defendant in addition to considering the safety of the general public.
4. The right to prevent disclosure of confidential information or records to the defendant, the defendant's attorney, or any other person acting on behalf of the defendant which could be used to locate or harass the victim or the victim's family or which disclose confidential communications made in the course of medical or counseling treatment, or which are otherwise privileged or confidential by law.
5. The right to refuse an interview, deposition, or discovery request by the defendant, or any person acting on behalf of the defendant and to set reasonable conditions on the conduct of any such interview to which the victim consents.
6. The right to reasonable notice of and to reasonably confer with the prosecuting agency, upon request, regarding the arrest of the defendant if known by the prosecutor, the charges filed, the determination whether to extradite the defendant and upon request, to be notified of and informed before any pretrial disposition of the case.
7. The right to reasonable notice of all public proceedings, including delinquency proceedings, upon request, at which the defendant and the prosecutor are entitled to be

present and of all parole or other post-conviction release proceedings and to be present at all such proceedings.

8. The right to be heard, upon request at any proceedings, including delinquency proceedings, involving a post-arrest release decision, plea, sentencing, post-conviction release decision or any proceeding at which a right of the victim is at issue.

9. The right to a speedy trial and a prompt and final conclusion of the case and any post-judgment proceedings.

10. The right to provide information to a probation department official conducting a pre-sentence investigation concerning the impact of the offense on the victim and the victim's family and any sentencing recommendations before the sentencing of the defendant.

11. The right to receive, upon request, the pre-sentence report when available to the defendant, except for those portions made confidential by law.

12. The right to be informed, upon request, of the conviction, sentence, place and time of incarceration, or other disposition of the defendant, including pardon or clemency, the scheduled release date of the defendant and the release of or escape by the defendant from custody.

13. To restitution.

a. All persons who suffer losses as a result of criminal activity shall have the right to seek and secure restitution from the persons convicted of the crimes causing the losses they suffer.

b. Restitution should be required ordered from every convicted wrongdoer in every case, regardless of the sentence or disposition imposed in which a crime victim suffers a loss.

c. All monetary payments, monies and property collected from any person who has been convicted should first be applied to pay the amounts ordered as restitution to the victim.

14. Crime victims now have the right to prompt return of property when no longer needed as evidence and law enforcement or judicial departments not complying should be subject to sanction.

15. Crime victims should have the right to be informed of all parole procedures, to participate in the parole process, to provide information to the parole authority that shall be considered by the parole authority as part of a decision on whether to grant parole and to be notified upon request, of the release of the offender. The sanction for proceeding to a decision on parole without due consideration of the victim input should require the initial parole hearing be voided and be held again to allow for victim input.

16. The right to include the safety of the victim and or the victim's family and the general public considered before any post- judgment release decision is made.

17. The right to be informed of these rights and that the crime victim have the right to enforce his or her rights in the criminal proceeding and at the appellate level of the courts of Arkansas.

We believe there must be immediate construction of additional prison space and use of economic alternatives such as private prisons and prison space in other states to alleviate the crisis created by ignoring the reality of the need for incarcerating violent criminals.

We support the following:

Timely payment by the state to counties for holding parole violators awaiting revocation hearings and for holding all state prisoners awaiting space in state prison facilities.

Significant reforms to the parole and probation systems to support the mission of public safety.

End furloughs for any persons convicted of violent crimes.

Prohibit the use of public office as a shield from prosecution. Pension rights or other public benefits of office holders and public employees convicted of felonies or misdemeanors related to moral integrity must be forfeited.

Reform the grand jury system by requiring Circuit Judges to convene a grand jury when 10% of those voting in the last gubernatorial election in a county sign a petition calling for a grand jury.

Local and state administration of prisons, with emphasis on both punishment and rehabilitation of prisoners.

Uniform and vigorous enforcement of the Domestic Abuse Act.

Meaningful reform of the probation system, with accountability and increased monitoring.

Prisoners should be required to perform meaningful work in proportion to their skills and abilities.

No convicted felon should be given organ transplants at taxpayer's expense.

Capital punishment, when properly applied is a deterrent to crime and should be used. It should also be done swiftly after the last appeal.

An adult who commits forcible rape upon a minor deserves to be imprisoned for life without parole.

We support legislation that is directed at protecting children from access to pornography And we strongly urge parental responsibility in this area.

## **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

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We firmly support transparency at every level of government. Those elected, appointed, and employed in government work for the taxpayers of this state and should provide public information when requested, in line with the tenants of the 1967 Arkansas Freedom of Information Act.

The legislative intent of the Act states is at Section 15-19-102 that, "It is vital in a democratic society that public business be performed in an open and public manner so that the electors shall be advised of the performance of public officials and of the decisions that are reached in public activity and in making public policy. Toward this end, this chapter is adopted, making it possible for them, or their representatives to learn and to report fully the activities of their public officials."

We support further transparency in enacting a requirement that notice of public meetings be given not only to the press but also directly to the people by posting notices on government Web sites and sending them by e-mail and social media to interested parties.

We support defining unpublished memoranda, working papers, and correspondence of the Governor, members of the General Assembly, Court of Appeals, Supreme Court Judges, and the Attorney General to clarify that this covers documents created by these individuals and those working for them and not documents or information sent to the elected officials after creation by members of the public.

We support clarification of the open meeting aspect of the law to make clear that local government officials are not to conduct public business outside the parameters of duly noticed public meetings so that the public has the opportunity to see the entire decision-making process and participate if they so choose.

## **HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS**

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All Arkansans who believe in our goals of rewards equal to effort expended, freedom, justice, and responsive government are urged to join us in promoting that human rights, civil rights, and due process be available equally to all persons without regard to race, ethnic background, age, gender, 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 to succeed regardless of race, nationality, origin, gender or creed, and be granted no special preferences based on these criteria.

3. We believe that unborn children have a fundamental individual right to life. We oppose assisted suicide, euthanasia, genocide, infanticide, cloning, partial birth, and all abortion, and embryonic/fetal stem cell research. We affirm our support of the Human Heart Beat and the Pain Capable Act of 2013. We affirm our support for a Human Life Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. We endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children. 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 human life. We urge the overturning of Roe v. Wade.

4. We affirm our support of legislation that ensures abortion coverage is prohibited from being mandated in state-sponsored health care exchanges, federal exchanges, federal-state partnerships, and high risk pools created under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.

5. We commend those who provide or promote alternatives to abortion.

6. We support the elimination of barriers and ensuring equal opportunities for the physically disabled.

7. We fully support the Second Amendment and the Constitutional right of individual citizens to keep and bear arms. We call on governments at all levels to strictly enforce existing gun laws.

8. We support a national "right-to-carry" law for persons with concealed permits to travel freely on interstate journeys.

9. We believe 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. Churches, synagogues, and other places of worship must not be regulated, controlled, or taxed by any government entity.

10. We recognize the importance of the Declaration of Independence in American history and the founding of our country. References to the Creator must remain in this document, on public buildings and in government sanctioned activities. We further express our belief that the reference to "One Nation Under God" must be retained in the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" on our monies. We reject the contention that these phrases violate the First Amendment. We believe statements regarding religion and morality made by our Founding Fathers are just as relevant today as they were more than 200 years ago.

11. We affirm that all citizens have the absolute right to make public references to God in all public functions and venues.

## FAMILY VALUES

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1. We support the traditional definition of marriage as a God-ordained, legal and moral commitment between a man and a woman. 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 believe that each individual family has the primary responsibility for its own welfare, including education, moral training, and conduct.
2. We affirm our support for Amendment 83 of the Arkansas Constitution, as overwhelmingly passed by the people in 2004.

## HOMELAND SECURITY AND THE WAR ON TERROR

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

Consequences continue to mount as a result of eliminating many prudent and obviously effective policies toward home land defense and the prevention of terrorism. We support a Homeland security policy that knows our enemy, stops terrorists before they attack and treats terrorism as a martial rather than criminal offense.

We support reducing the strain on our military by increasing the statutory level of our armed forces. We back the increased support of our veterans particularly with high quality government funded medical care.

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 recognize and appreciate the sacrifice of their families and our obligation to them.

We oppose the acquisition of nuclear weapons by our adversaries, and support the Reagan philosophy of "Peace Through Strength." This should be achieved by maintaining our country's nuclear weapons at a level capable of deterring enemy nations.

We are proud of the United States of America and the role our nation plays in spreading freedom around the world. We also realize that once we lose the respect of our adversaries, our liberty is in jeopardy. Therefore, we stand united against abusive dictators and threatening regimes. Furthermore, we believe that the United States should stand with our friends and allies around the world.

We believe that the enemy we face today in Islamic extremism is as menacing as the enemy we faced in communism some years ago. Furthermore, we believe that recklessly downplaying the nature and magnitude of the terrorist threat jeopardizes our liberty. Therefore, we support the War Powers Act and active anti-terrorism efforts by our security agencies and military forces.

We support the war against radical Islamic terrorists and nations that support them. We reaffirm our defense of religious freedom for all peaceful religions because this is the foundation upon which our country was founded.

We support the law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other emergency responders who are on the front line here at home.

## **DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE**

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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 believe that current medical evidence and research do not support the legalization of marijuana for medical treatment.

We support periodic evaluations of education programs for tobacco, drug, and alcohol abuse and further recommend increasing fees for multiple offenders. This increased funding will provide for additional programs or improvements in the existing 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 designation of part of Arkansas as the HIDTA (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 partner effectively 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 Courts in Arkansas which combine effective treatment with accountability and has been proven to reduce recidivism among participants. We urge increased state funding of drug courts.

We recognize that there has been a historic disparity in the sentencing of drug offenders. Those convicted of "crack cocaine" offenses have been sentenced to much longer prison sentences than those convicted of "powder cocaine" or methamphetamine offenses. This difference has resulted in a greater incarceration rate for black offenders. We applaud the 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 sentences or who are on work release. This reintegration of offenders into society is essential to avoid recidivism.

## IMMIGRATION

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As citizens of the United States, a nation of immigrants, we recognize the important contributions immigrants from all nations have made to the economic and cultural strength of the United States. We also 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 and those who overstay their visas.

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 are a result from overstaying a legitimately issued visa and the Immigration and Naturalization Service has frequently demonstrated the inability to process petitions for legal immigrants in a timely manner, we call for the federal government to reorganize this agency so that it becomes more effective and efficient in the execution of its assigned duties.

We also recognize that workers from other countries 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 employer verification system that will require the employer to verify legal status prior to hiring or offering employment.

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 or overstay. 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 encourage the Governor to direct the Arkansas State Police to be trained and engaged in immigration law enforcement.

The State of Arkansas should 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 due to the exploitation of identity documents by illegal aliens.

We support English being recognized as the official language of the United States of America. This does not preclude governmental use of other languages in documents and forms. We oppose the printing of voter registration forms in any language other than English.

We believe that enforcement of immigration law by local police will remove the majority of illegal aliens from the State of Arkansas. We therefore support a concentrated effort to use attrition and enforcement to remove as many illegal aliens as possible without giving any path to citizenship or any other reward to those who enter the state illegally.

We believe that a massive deportation is impractical. Therefore we support focusing deportation efforts on criminal aliens while granting renewable residency status without giving any path to citizenship, to those who have established roots in our society, meeting criteria such as worthiness, family ties, and payment of a fine.

We recognize that Arkansas is blessed with a growing number of immigrants that are working hard, fulfilling their obligation to community and country, and contributing to the social fabric of this great State. We support efforts by immigrants to assimilate into our state, our language and our culture.

## **ENVIRONMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND ENERGY POLICY**

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We will 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 the State of Arkansas and all of America is important to us and future generations. We encourage recycling to reduce waste, conservation of energy including the use of practical and cost-effective renewable energy sources and choosing products which are not harmful to plants and wildlife.

We support local, state and federal programs, and market based incentives to promote a thriving natural environment, enhancing quality of life, and advancement of economic prosperity including:

1. Maintain air quality.
2. Maintain water quality and conservation of wetlands.
3. Cleanup and redevelopment of hazardous waste sites.
4. Promotion of land conservation and stewardship.
5. Development of a realistic growth-oriented and scientifically based approach to the questions surrounding 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. We believe that a long-term strategy for energy independence must include:

1. Establishment of a coherent policy that affords access to our vast natural resources while protecting our natural environment.
2. Opening of the Outer Continental Shelf, oil shale regions, and other domestic sources of oil for exploration and drilling now.
3. Loosening of the environmental regulations that make it impossible to build new oil refineries.
4. Investments in proven technologies to ensure an abundant, safe, reliable, and affordable energy supply.
5. Arkansas is among the top natural gas producing states and we support responsible development and use of our domestic natural resources.

## HEALTHCARE ISSUES

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Healthcare is not a right; it is a service. As a compassionate society we will aid those in need; however, a government takeover of healthcare is detrimental to the entire health care system.

We support:

1. Long-term Medicare solutions:
  - a. Form a bipartisan commission to make recommendations.

b. Assure long-term solvency by implementing cost saving measures that reduce bureaucracy, fraud and abuse.

c. Implement optional plans that combine public and private efforts to provide citizen access to and choices among various kinds of coverage.

2. Health Savings Accounts which allow 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". We 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. We strongly support Medical tort liability reform through an amendment to the state constitution. We 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: We 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, and patients should be free to voluntarily pay doctors out of personal funds for such medical care, even when rendered outside the Medicare system. We 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.

10. 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.

11. Legislation to treat mental and physical illnesses equitably and fairly.

12. Efforts to implement more access to Community Based Health Centers; to meet the health care needs of the uninsured and underinsured in their communities.

13. 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.

14. Creation of a legal environment for pharmaceutical companies to develop new drugs and lower costs to consumers.

15. Replace Obamacare with a well-designed conservative initiative.