

REPUBLICAN PARTY OF ARKANSAS PLATFORM 2016

As adopted August 6, 2016

Preamble

We, the Republican Party of Arkansas, believe the United States Constitution is the fundamental framework for our federal government and is a **literal document that is as relevant today as it was when our nation's Founders adopted it**. We support its precepts and, as patriots, vow to defend them. As such, we as members of the body politic of the State of Arkansas, will protect and defend the rights of our fellow Arkansans guaranteed by our Bill of Rights generally, and the Ninth and Tenth Amendments specifically.

As members of the Republican Party of Arkansas, we believe our platform affirms the greatness and exceptional nature of our country, the importance of our Great State as an equal member of a Union built upon a foundation of great dreams and grand realities, and the spirit of a people who live by the simplest and most poignant mission statement of all: ***Regnat Populus***.

Reaffirming that **God is the source of our rights**, and they are protected by imperfect souls who rely on their God-given gifts to serve their neighbors, we therefore submit this platform to the people of Arkansas and to its elected representatives to serve as a roadmap to our state's continued prosperity and as an invitation to hardworking Arkansans to **join us on our journey to realize a positive conservative vision** of a stronger and modern Arkansas based upon the following principles:

The self-evident truths at our nation's founding are still self-evident today. We are created equally with **Individual freedoms and liberties** that, through our own exercise of **individual responsibility and initiative**, can result in great outcomes independent of government. As we are endowed with these abilities by God at our creation, we assert the **sanctity of human life** and affirm that unborn children have a right to live that cannot be infringed.

Without the rights to **private property**, individual rights are diminished. As such, we recognize the importance of **lower taxes** not only to spur economic growth, but to ensure that individuals reap more of the benefits of their hard work. We strongly believe in the **equal and just enforcement of the law**, especially as it pertains to an overreaching government threatening private lands, businesses, and inherent freedoms.

Our self-evident rights must always continue to be secured at the personal, state, national, and international levels. We believe in a **strong national defense** and honor those men and women who, for the long history of our country, have stood sentry on our behalf and, in some cases, given us their last full measure of devotion. We also believe in **securing our national borders** to protect our homeland while still welcoming legal immigrants and visitors. None of our rights

and freedoms, however, can be truly guaranteed without the **right to own and bear arms** as an individual's hedge against government and as a means for self-defense in our home, on our property, and of our person.

The vibrancy and vitality of our republican form of government requires three **separate and coequal branches** as spelled out in both the federal and state constitutions. Through a robust system of checks and balances, no one branch of government—whether located in Washington, D.C., or Little Rock—should wield more authority than the other two.

May God continue to pour out His blessings on the Great State of Arkansas and forever shed His grace on the United States of America.

Economic Prosperity and Job Growth

The State of Arkansas is the Land of Opportunity. The abundant resources of our Natural State are blessings equaled only by the **hardworking people who call her home**.

Our state is home to global leaders of their industries who began as small businesses. Today, other entrepreneurs are using their God-given talents to build futures for their families, as well as their neighbors whom they will employ. However, despite our history of business successes, our state has historically underperformed in economic and income growth.

Entrusted by the voters with a new Republican majority, our state now has the opportunity to enhance its global business presence while empowering all Arkansans to participate in a dynamic economy rooted in **free enterprise, economic freedom, and personal liberty**.

As Arkansas Republicans, our primary belief to secure a strong economic future for our state is this:

PEOPLE CREATE BUSINESSES; BUSINESSES CREATE JOBS; GOVERNMENT DOES NOT

As such, we recognize that Arkansas's **small businesses are the drivers of our economy**. We believe that all levels of government must continually work to be more understanding of the needs of small business owners and do all it can to meet them.

Business needs to operate **free from overly burdensome regulation and over-taxation**—which are headwinds against Arkansans' ability to build competitive and sustainable businesses that can create jobs.

We adamantly believe the strong and dynamic economy we envision should **span the width and breadth of our state**. We support government development of programs that facilitate the creation of new business and encourage growth in economically-distressed areas. We support

prudent initiatives that provide access to capital, business management training, and procurement assistance to struggling firms.

While we support ways government can create an environment that could lead to success, we also hold the strong belief that **each individual is responsible for his or her place in society**. We encourage all Arkansans to secure the reward resulting from hard work that society has to offer individuals, their families, and those unable to care for themselves. Furthermore, we believe in the concept of the “ownership society” that encourages Arkansans to control their own resources and invest as they so desire.

Arkansas Republicans realize there are circumstances where individuals are not capable of earning a living wage. We support programs and incentives that **enable people to seek employment with the goal of becoming self-sufficient**. As an individual is responsible to be prepared to take on a new job, we support government investment into drug testing programs for those receiving unemployment benefits.

We favor free and fair trade so that Arkansas can continue to be a player in global markets thanks to our products and produce. **We oppose sacrificing Arkansas-based jobs to other countries** in the pursuit of trade agreements, and we similarly oppose trade policies or agreements that encumber the ability of Arkansas farmers to export their produce.

Our farmers are excellent stewards of their land, and they provide the world with safe and wholesome food and natural resources. **We support Arkansans’ right to use their land in the way they see fit**, including the use of diverse production methods and technologies free from burdensome federal regulations. And, as our state’s farm production holds a preeminent place on the world stage, we support efforts to open new international markets to our products that have heretofore been closed.

As Republicans, we believe we should take a leadership role in illustrating to our citizens and private businesses that they can **protect our Natural State, its resources, and environment without additional intervention from government or international agreement**. We support recycling to reduce waste, energy conservation, and the use of **cost-effective renewable energy**. We believe economic prosperity can be advanced through market-based initiatives that maintain air and water quality, conserve our world-renowned wetlands and natural beauty, and clean and redevelop waste sites.

We further believe our nation should continue to **move away from dependence on foreign sources of energy by utilizing home-grown resources**—especially those located within our state’s borders—while protecting our environment. We also support efforts that would allow energy resources developed in Arkansas to be further utilized domestically and exported globally.

While our state has many blessings for which to be thankful, our most valuable economic resource is the hardworking people that epitomize the Land of Opportunity. Recognizing the

importance of all Arkansans possessing the opportunity to be able to put a roof over their heads, clothes on their backs, and food on their tables, Arkansas Republicans strongly believe in our **right to work** in any job free from compulsory group membership with associated mandatory or suggested fees. We support Arkansas workers in their right to collectively bargain if they so choose. Furthermore, we believe every Arkansas worker has the right to be fully informed by both sides in any organizing effort. We strongly believe a worker's right to a secure ballot to be guaranteed.

Education Reform

The education of Arkansans goes hand-in-hand with our desire to grow the state economically. To become a greater player on the global stage, our children must be given the tools to succeed in their chosen fields through education. With a focus on the future, Arkansas Republicans proudly offer this simple statement to be the heart of our vision:

EVERY EDUCATION DECISION WE MAKE IS WITH THE STUDENTS AND PARENTS FIRST IN OUR MINDS

Arkansas's children deserve world-class educations, regardless of their ZIP code. This requires openness to every type of educational system available: homeschooling, distance learning, public school, private school, or charter school. **Every tool should be given equal consideration** and be utilized in a manner that puts the student's needs above all.

We value all contribution from those who are involved in the vocation of educating our children. Whether it is state government, the local school board, the district administrator, the site principal, or the classroom teacher, we support all efforts that enable them to put students first. We call on all involved in the vocation of educating our children to put aside petty squabbles over power or profit that ultimately detracts from the true constitutional responsibility of our state: **to secure to the people the advantages and opportunities of education.**

As students should be the first consideration, parents also have an important responsibility in the education of their children. Every opportunity for every family to enroll each child in the school of their choice should be secured by government and offered to Arkansas families. Parents must have the ability to make informed choices regarding the education of their children and should not be reined in by lines on a map or the cost of tuition. As such, **we support state government creating ways where families can make the best choice for their children's education and be able to afford it.** In the digital age, old wars over (literal) turf need to be abandoned in order to put the educational needs of students back in the place of primacy.

Students and parents deserve school administrators who are focused on delivering world-class

instruction in an efficient and cost-effective manner while maintaining a safe environment for students and teachers. **Discipline must be enforced in our schools, and the physical security of students, staff, and school buildings should never be in doubt.**

Students deserve **high educational standards developed by parents, educators, and leaders accountable to our citizens** instead of a one-size-fits-all model that limits our teachers' ability to inspire and engage students due to a focus on standardized testing. As such, we applaud the Governor for the creation of his Council on Common Core Review and are grateful to the Lieutenant Governor for his hard work to recommend ways our state can take complete ownership of our standards.

We believe that a robust, high-quality curriculum will better prepare our children to succeed locally, nationally, and globally. We believe **all students should have access** to courses in the arts, civics, financial literacy, life skills, vocational training, and computer science. We applaud the Governor's initiative on computer coding that has placed Arkansas at the forefront of the learn to code movement and made our state a national leader in computer science. We also applaud the legislature for recognizing the importance of STEM education and its support for requiring schools to offer computer science classes to Arkansas students. Furthermore, as healthy minds reside in healthy bodies, we support increased opportunities for physical exercise—from personal fitness to interscholastic athletics—in every grade level.

As Arkansas Republicans, we strongly applaud the public statements by **state elected officials standing up for the safety of Arkansas public school students** and opposing the overreach of the federal government's efforts to guide communities, school boards, teachers, and administrators to enforce its vision without congressional authority and upon pain of withholding education funding.

Government Reform

Reform of government begins with the election of **trustworthy and qualified Arkansas Republicans** to office at every level of government. This will ensure responsible and effective management of our state's fiscal and natural resources, and honor the hardworking taxpayers which those who hold office serve.

Honest elections are the foundation of our republican form of government and we strongly applaud every effort Arkansas Republicans have previously undertaken to ensure our ballot is protected and that access is guaranteed for all authorized voters, including the elderly, the military, and young voters. Every time that a fraudulent vote is cast, it effectively cancels out the vote of a legitimate voter.

Due to court rulings, the only way the people of Arkansas can require photo identification for voting is via amendment to our State Constitution. Therefore, we strongly encourage the

Arkansas General Assembly to refer to the people of Arkansas **a constitutional amendment that would require photo identification** and, short of that, we encourage the Republican Party of Arkansas to support the collection of signatures to place such an amendment on the ballot. Additionally, we strongly support requiring proof of citizenship at the time of voter registration, as well as the vigorous enforcement of election laws and the aggressive prosecution of violations.

As the Republican Party of Arkansas is the legally defined majority party in our state, we **strongly encourage all members of our party to participate in the election process through working at polling sites**. We strongly support all efforts to empower all county election commissioners to properly train poll workers to ensure the smooth running of elections and to guarantee the integrity of the voting process. We strongly support the Electoral College process and oppose any effort to alter Arkansas's role in electing the President of the United States.

We firmly support **transparency and openness at every level of government**. Those elected, appointed, and employed in government work for the taxpayers of this state and they should provide public information when requested, in line with Arkansas's Freedom of Information Act. We support requiring 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 social media accounts**, and sending them by e-mail to interested parties. 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. In order to guarantee transparency, we support increased efforts to facilitate and ensure the timely fulfillment of the public's request for information **without bias or political consideration**.

In the spirit of increased transparency, Arkansas Republicans support requiring elected officials, candidates for office, and political organizations to **file fundraising and expenditure reports electronically**. We further support government investment in technology to allow the public to quickly search and compile these reports.

Arkansas Republicans believe **the right of free speech includes the ability for our citizens to devote their resources to whatever cause or candidate they support**. We are opposed to any restrictions that would discourage Arkansans from fully exercising their First Amendment rights, or limit their commitment to their beliefs. We further oppose any state or federal efforts to impair Arkansans' free speech rights guaranteed in the Constitution and upheld by the Supreme Court.

State government must continue to **live within its means** and we applaud the hard work of the legislative and executive branches to follow our state's revenue stabilization law. We strongly believe Arkansans' are best able to spend the money they earn and deserve to be free from the hassle of burdensome taxes and fees. We applaud the ongoing efforts of Arkansas's new

Republican majority to lower taxes and govern efficiently.

Arkansas Republicans continue to support the absence of death taxes in our state and strongly support the repeal of the federal death tax. We also support the elimination of the state tax on capital gains. We applaud income tax cuts made into law by Arkansas Republicans in recent years and strongly support the further expansion of income tax relief for **all of our citizens**.

Over the last several years, Arkansans have witnessed a “sea-change” in its government with the establishment of a new Republican majority. By their votes, our citizens have given our party’s elected officials the opportunity to put our state on the track to greater prosperity and success. In order to bolster the ability of Arkansas Republicans to carry out this charge from our citizens, we support the **updating of the rules governing both chambers of our legislature to reflect our party’s growing majority**. As such, we support an update to guarantee that the majority party of each legislative chamber comprise the majority of the membership on each chambers’ legislative committees, and that each chair of a chambers’ legislative committee be held by a member of the majority party for that respective chamber. We further support allowing each party’s legislative caucus determine among themselves which of them are to serve on legislative committees, as we believe the best legislators should serve on the committee that best suits their talents instead of assignments being subject to seniority or random lot.

Further legislative reforms should include the **elimination of General Improvement Fund spending**, as there should be openness and transparency in the spending of appropriated money. Arkansas Republicans recognize the importance of such funding for local projects, but believe that all those seeking state funds for special projects should be subject to examination and oversight of the people’s elected representatives through the appropriations process.

Justice Reform

We strongly believe that 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**.

Both federal and Arkansas law require juveniles and adult offenders be held separately. We support age-appropriate juvenile programs that are coupled with crime-appropriate terms of confinement. Those programs, and that confinement, must be carried out in a humane manner.

Arkansas Republicans believe that **crime victims must have a voice throughout the criminal justice process**. We support efforts to incorporate crime victims’ rights into our justice system and that they be honored by law enforcement and the judiciary.

Significant changes to parole and probation systems still need to continue to support the mission of public safety. We support the **ending of furloughs for those who have been convicted of and incarcerated for violent crimes**. Our prisons should place an emphasis on both incarceration for punishment and rehabilitation efforts during that incarceration. We support the expansion of private sector efforts and community support for the employment of offenders who have fulfilled their sentences as tools to help with the reintegration of offenders into society and to avoid recidivism.

Capital punishment, when properly applied, is a deterrent to crime and should be used swiftly following an inmate's last appeal. We support **consideration of alternative methods** consistent with constitutional protections in the event the state's current method becomes untenable.

Substance abuse continues to tear apart our way of life across all socioeconomic levels. We **support a balanced approach to fighting illegal drug abuse** including tough law enforcement, effective drug education efforts, and the continued expansion of drug treatment with accountability and effective drug court programs. We oppose decriminalization of dangerous drugs including marijuana.

We believe **health care costs can be reduced by tort reform**. Medical liability regulations and statutes should be revised by limiting the circumstances under which such cases may be properly pursued and the extent of damage claims involving pain and suffering. As such, we strongly support medical tort liability reform through an amendment to the state constitution. We further support the creation of a legal environment for pharmaceutical companies to develop new drugs and lower costs to consumers.

Domestic Security

We believe the global war on terror is the transcendent challenge of this generation. We support a federal and state homeland security policy that knows our enemy, stops terrorists before they attack, and treats terrorism as a martial rather than criminal offense. We back the increased statutory level of our armed forces, and increased support of our veterans with high-quality health care and the full benefits they have earned for themselves and their families through their service and sacrifice to our country.

We believe the enemy we face today in Islamic extremism is as menacing as any enemy this country has ever faced. We support the war against Islamic terrorists and the nations who enable and support them. Arkansas Republicans strongly support consistent and unequivocal acknowledgment from our leaders **that a terrorist attack on American soil is "a terrorist attack."** We support law enforcement officers, firefighters, and other emergency personnel who are on the front line here at home to protect, rescue, and assist us when the need arises.

As citizens of a nation of immigrants, **we recognize the important contributions immigrants**

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 through flagrant disregard of our laws by those who illegally enter our country, and those who overstay their visas. 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.

Arkansas Republicans believe that **English is our official language** and oppose the publication of government forms, including ballots, in any other language.

We also support a greater partnership by the State of Arkansas and federal authorities in the area of immigration enforcement. We encourage the **training of the Arkansas State Police and local law enforcement agencies to assist in the enforcement of immigration laws**. We strongly believe that deportation efforts should be focused on those who violate our criminal laws.

We strongly support legal immigration and proudly welcome those legally in our state. We encourage those who work hard and fulfill their obligations to community and country, and their assimilation into the social fabric of our great state.

We support focusing deportation efforts on criminal aliens while granting renewable residency status, without 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.

Individual Freedom

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion. Article 2 of the Arkansas Constitution guarantees that “no human authority can, in any case or manner whatsoever, control or interfere with the right of conscience.” As such, Arkansas Republicans believe in our **natural and infeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of our own consciences**. We further affirm our **defense of religious freedom** for all peaceful religions and that all citizens have the absolute right to make public references to God in all public functions and venues.

Arkansas Republicans 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. Each Arkansas family has the primary responsibility for its own welfare, including the education and moral training of its children.

Arkansas Republicans support the traditional definition of marriage as a God-ordained, legal and moral commitment **between a man and a woman**.

We are imperfect beings created in God's image, and as such 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. Most importantly, we believe **all unborn children have a fundamental right to live** in order to avail themselves of those equal opportunities. We commend all those who provide or promote alternatives to abortion. We also oppose assisted suicide, euthanasia, genocide, infanticide, cloning, and embryonic/fetal stem cell research.

We applaud all recent legislation passed by Arkansas Republicans that promotes life and withholds the use of public monies to pay for abortions or finance groups that enable it. Furthermore, we support the appointment and election of judges who **respect traditional family values, the sanctity of human life, and are committed to overturn *Roe v. Wade***.

Arkansas Republicans support 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. We oppose federal efforts to force doctors and hospitals to **treat patients according to self-perceived gender identity**, and federal rules requiring state health programs to offer coverage for that treatment.

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. Arkansas Republicans support the freedom of every Arkansan to **choose the health insurance plan that best suits his or her needs**, as well as the freedom not to choose without the threat of reprisal from the federal government through taxes or fines. We strongly support the repeal of the Affordable Care Act and its replacement with laws where Arkansans have multiple patient-centric health choices and states have full flexibility and authority to design a Medicaid program that best fit their needs through federal block grants.

Arkansas Republicans strongly commend our state's efforts to **combat human trafficking**. We salute those in law enforcement who rescue the victims of human trafficking and support all efforts to provide victims comfort and healing from their nightmare. We also applaud the **bipartisan work of the Arkansas General Assembly to improve our laws** so that we may do our part to defeat this modern-day scourge and call for continued vigilance so that no person shall be held in slavery or servitude.

Equality of individuals before the law has always been a cornerstone of our party. Bigotry has no place in our state. Arkansas Republicans denounce those persons, organizations, publications, and movements that practice or promote racism, hate actions, or religious intolerance.

As Republicans, we fully support the **Second Amendment's guarantee of our individual right to keep and bear arms**. We call on governments at all levels to strictly enforce existing gun laws. As such, we call on all Arkansas law enforcement and prosecutors to recognize that **Act**

746 of 2013 allows our citizens to freely carry handguns in the open. Furthermore, we support efforts to expand reciprocity agreements to allow Arkansans with concealed weapons permits to travel freely on interstate journeys.

Epilogue

Those who consider themselves conservative will find **a home in the Republican Party of Arkansas** with many rooms that we have prepared for them. We welcome all who wish to grow beyond their natural desire to be of quiet service to their families and neighbors, and serve their communities, state, and nation by becoming engaged in public matters and help shape the debates that will set a course toward the future.

Our state's future prosperity is contingent upon a **new generation of Arkansans** who were raised with common-sense conservative values and wish those values to be protected and strengthened in order that they may be passed on to our heirs. We welcome those who cherish learning and who use the tools of the digital age to educate themselves in order to be citizens prepared to participate in our republican form of government. We seek conservative activists who will one day seek elective and appointed offices to fight for a future where **prosperity, freedom, and liberty** are our citizens' rewards for good work.

In 1960, Winthrop Rockefeller held a "Party for Two Parties" on Petit Jean Mountain. His goal: **to turn Arkansas into a two-party state** after nearly a century of Democratic domination. It wasn't until 50 years later that his dream came true with the historic 2010 elections. Since then, our party has grown significantly.

Along the way, some Arkansans who were conservative made the choice to wear the Republican label. We recognize that not all conservatives in our state are quite ready to make that leap. Rest assured that even if you're not ready to join us quite yet, **we are fighting for you and your family everyday.**

When you choose to knock on our door, you will find yourself welcome with open arms.

God bless you, our great state, and our exceptional nation.