

Mesa County Democratic Party 2022 Platform

Introduction:

The Democratic Party has a long and proud history of promoting hope, opportunity, and progress toward a better life for the citizens of these United States. The Democratic Party is rooted in the ideas set forth in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The Democratic platform of Mesa County builds on these historic foundations.

The passage of time and events between 2020 and 2022 significantly impacted the platform presented here. Global and local events associated with the coronavirus pandemic, declared in March 2020, and escalation of climate change affected the health of our environment, our community, and our economy. Mesa County has experienced an upheaval of “normal” work and play, health and learning, governing policies, and demeanor. We have experienced in glaring ways the lack of equity in access to health care, to education, to adequate water and agricultural benefits, and even to the ballot.

The platform describes the Party’s considerations and aspirations in six broad areas that encompass the livelihood and culture of Mesa County:

I. Climate change and the environment: Mesa County Democrats recognize the scientific fact of human-caused global climate change that is building to a crisis. The future of our air, water, agriculture, economy, migration, and health requires us to educate and prepare citizens for this rapidly changing future.

II. Economy: Mesa County Democrats support a diversified economy predicated on quality of life, a livable wage and affordable housing, determined by real economic tenets and the development of sustainable, environmentally sound industries.

III. Government: Mesa County Democrats support same-day registration and oppose all efforts to suppress voter participation and block access to the voting process. Voting is a citizen’s most important constitutional right. The government- local, State, and Federal- should represent all citizens.

IV. Health Care: Mesa County Democrats support affordable, accessible, and comprehensive universal health insurance and coverage for all. We believe healthcare is a fundamental human right. We define health as a holistic concept including incorporating physical, mental, and environmental health.

V. Quality of Life: Mesa County Democrats believe that all residents have the right to have safe and affordable housing, mental health support resources, affordable child care, clean water, and access to recreational resources.

VI. Education: Mesa County Democrats believe a strong public education system, preschool through college, with adequate and equitable funding and independent from political influences, is essential to creating an informed democratic society.

I. Climate change and the environment

The Mesa County Democrats:

- support the development of energy from renewable sources and long-distance public transit systems for travel to major population hubs.
- support Mesa County’s recycling programs for residences and businesses. We support access to recycling for all reaches of the County and a move toward mandatory recycling plus a ban on

plastic bags and single-use plastics. We support a move toward recycling all types of plastics and developing compostable alternatives to plastic packaging.

- support developing programs for local use of recycled products such as composting organic materials for bedding, making usable products out of recycled materials and recovering excess building materials for affordable housing.
- support efforts to improve the efficient use of energy.
- support efforts to lessen the impact of burning fossil fuels by supporting a transition of energy development from carbon-based energies to renewable and sustainable energies.
- support building a network of hubs in the County for EV and other clean energy transportation. Local infrastructure needs expansion to accommodate and encourage the shift to electric vehicles.
- support solar or renewable energy on residential, public, and commercial buildings.
- support a carbon dividend on all forms of carbon-based energy.
- support reducing the use of public lands for carbon-emitting extractive industries. We support the continuation of public comment periods on public land issues.
- support the Clean Water Act of 1972. The Colorado and Gunnison Rivers and their tributaries are an irreplaceable resource in arid Mesa County.
- encourage adoption of conservation measures, informed decisions regarding landscaping in arid environments, and use of organic and natural fertilizers and/or natural pesticides. Xeriscaping is a valuable tool in this effort and should be implemented whenever possible in all settings to save this resource.
- support healthy river systems by encouraging private and public collaborations focused on restoring species biodiversity along the Colorado and Gunnison Rivers and tributaries, including removal of invasive species. We support reclamation and restoration of the cottonwood/willow riparian ecosystem.
- support programs to provide alternate transportation corridors including non-motorized access to State parks and wildlife areas, venues for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, bird viewing and other recreational activities.
- support The Riverfront Project and other efforts to connect community resources, open spaces, and parks by completing recreational trails along the greenways of the rivers.
- support the expansion of preparations for wildfire events and wildfire mitigation.
- support the adoption of grey water recycling systems in zoning codes in Mesa County.

II. Economy

Mesa County Democrats:

- support assisting workers displaced by the transition of energy sources to secure training and placement in new careers. We support utilizing just transition funding in support of this effort.
- oppose the unfair tax practice that heavily reduces the severance taxes paid by the extractive industries to the State of Colorado. We support the repeal of the Ad Valorem tax credit.
- support creation of a multi-modal transportation plan to connect all areas of the County.
- support an equitable vehicle tax program to fund roads, bridges, sidewalks, and bike paths. With the rapid growth of electric, fuel cell and hydrogen sources to propel vehicles, the revenue generated by the gasoline tax is insufficient. Much of our infrastructure needs repair and improvement that will require the vehicle tax revenue.
- support passage of the CORE Act for protecting public lands for recreational use. Tourism is a significant driver of Mesa County's economy. Federal public lands occupy 76% of the county.
- support strong partnerships and cooperation between public and private entities and the County, State and Federal land management agencies. We support the goal of developing and promoting recreational opportunities and facilities, subject to regulations that will protect the significant natural and cultural resources in Mesa County.
- strongly oppose any attempt to transfer our public lands managed by Federal agencies to the State of Colorado or any other public or private entity.
- support protecting, improving, and maintaining all units of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service, both in Mesa County and nationally.
- support the development and expansion of affordable high-speed broadband internet to urban and rural areas. We believe access to information in the digital age is vital to economic competitiveness and individual success.
- support efforts to improve the quality of internet service in Mesa County and believe that every Mesa County citizen has a critical need to be able to access online government, business and learning resources.
- urge Colorado legislators to support streamlining small business licensing and tax collections by establishing common licensing laws and tax rates for the whole state.
- support the expansion of sustainable agricultural practices to ensure the ongoing health of our air, water, and land for future generations. Mesa County has traditionally been a strong agricultural region for the state of Colorado.
- support sustainable and organic agricultural programs in all Western Slope educational institutions.
- support the promotion of "field-to-fork" programs for locally grown products.

- support our historic preservation programs and protection of our historic neighborhoods, structures, and sites.
- support open bargaining, with or without union involvement, without fear, intimidation, or retribution. We believe that employees from any workforce merit respectful arbitration.
- believe that all employers should provide the following: sick time, family and pregnancy leave, and vacation time. These benefits should be available to all employees, regardless of the status of their employment.
- support equal pay for equal work.
- believe that a lifetime of work deserves a fair and livable retirement.

III. Government

Mesa County Democrats:

- support keeping same-day registration, universal mail-in ballots, and ample drop-off boxes. We oppose all efforts to suppress voter participation and block access to the voting process. Voting is a citizen's most important constitutional right. We support the Vote Without Fear Act passed by the Colorado legislature in 2022.
- support SB22-153, the Election Security Bill, to ensure that our elections are run by competent, knowledgeable officials and provide means to prevent insider threats.
- support a national holiday for Federal elections.
- support using ranked-choice voting for Federal, State, and local elections.
- support replacing the caucus process nominating system with a more accessible primary election.
- support fair and publicly funded elections including campaign finance reform that eliminates "dark money" from the process.
- demand that fundamental principles of freedom of religion and separation of church and State be upheld.
- believe all persons are entitled to equal treatment under the law regardless of race, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- support the ability of Mesa County to retain their excess tax revenues under TABOR. The fiscal crisis in Colorado has been precipitated by the intersection of the Gallagher (1982) and the TABOR (1992) Amendments to the Colorado Constitution. These consequences can only be addressed by constitutional reform.
- believe that our immigration system needs reform as it fails to meet the needs of our economy and our employers while inflicting a costly human toll on people caught between global market forces, climate change and outdated laws. Immigration is vital to America's economic prosperity.

- endorse a fair and equitable pathway to citizenship and support Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program recipients and their families.
- support continued international cooperation through our Sister City Program and other international cooperative programs.
- support the Master Land Use Plan that protects our historical agricultural heritage, accommodates the needs of population growth and new industries, while protecting the vital environmental qualities and natural resources that make Mesa County a desirable place to live and work.
- support an expansion of the County Commission to five commissioners from the present three. We also support three commissioners to be elected by voters living in their own district and two commissioners elected at-large. We support the number of signatures for independent candidates to get on the ballot to be lowered from 1000 to 500.
- support the restoration of the name “Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area” to the area currently named “McInnis Canyon.”

IV. Health Care

Mesa County Democrats:

- support accessible, affordable, and comprehensive universal health insurance and coverage for all. We believe healthcare is a fundamental human right. We define health as a holistic concept including incorporating physical, mental, and environmental health.
- support efforts to train, recruit and expand medical practitioners, including primary care providers, to bridge the gap between population health needs and available services.
- support efforts to provide state officials with the authority and flexibility to negotiate cost-saving benefits for consumers, such as the cost of pharmaceuticals, while maintaining the quality of care.
- support Medicare expansion to include dental, auditory, and visual benefits. In addition, we encourage Congress to authorize Medicare to negotiate pharmaceutical and medical device costs.
- believe reproductive information, services, and family planning must be readily and easily accessible to all genders and ages.
- believe in the constitutional guarantee of a woman’s right to make decisions regarding reproductive health care with her medical provider. We support the Colorado State law enshrining this belief.
- believe in the individual right to die with dignity and support providing access to the means to fulfill that dignity as prescribed by law.
- support the expansion of accessible mental health services including 24-hour crisis services and providers that accept Medicaid and Medicare. We believe that mental health is a key component

to overall health and well-being.

- support the expansion of community-based treatment for mental health disorders and support better integration of behavioral and general health care systems for continuity of care.
- support adequate assisted living and skilled nursing resources for those who need them.
- support a MCPH population health needs study to better understand the health care challenges of Mesa County.
- support substance abuse and addiction treatment available to all.
- support the development of a robust mental health workforce and programs to help encourage new professionals and to maintain existing professionals through legislative measures.
- support health care equity for all races, ethnicities, faiths, legal statuses, genders including LGBTQ+, languages including sign language, and disabilities.

V. Quality of Life

Mesa County Democrats:

- support a culture that does not tolerate any form of gender/sexual harassment. We encourage reporting of all forms of gender/sexual harassment, intimidation or unwanted physical contact in workplaces and schools without fear of retribution.
- believe that Mesa County and its municipalities should continue to provide and expand access to safe, affordable housing for all physical needs and income.
- support focused efforts on eliminating food deserts in Mesa County by encouraging easier year-round access to locally grown and raised food.
- support the funding of construction of a community recreation center in Grand Junction.
- support partnerships and creation of a Metropolitan Recreation District to maintain and build shared community recreation resources.
- Support further improvements and additions to the County's parks, walking and bicycle trail system.
- support affordable childcare programs.
- support expanding current resources for children and adults to address high rates of suicide, homelessness, substance use and other self-destructive behaviors; physical and sexual abuse of children; and human trafficking in Mesa County.
- support the adoption of diversity and equity programs in governmental entities to recognize the changing population.
- support the expansion of Veterans Affairs facilities and services, including programs for job training and employment of veterans, rehabilitative and mental health programs, and community

support for homeless veterans.

- believe there should be a ban on the sale of all military assault weapons and components including rapid fire attachments and accessories; at the very least, to make the minimum age 21 for any individual attempting to purchase military assault weapons and/or components. We support responsible gun ownership and training.
- support the implementation of a comprehensive universal background check on all gun purchases, prohibiting sales to individuals with a history of domestic abuse, emotional instability, mental illness, and prior legally designated violent crimes.
- support the development and implementation of “smart gun” technology.
- support changes to the criminal codes that reduce the length of incarceration for nonviolent offenders.
- encourage the implementation of alternative justice approaches focused on rehabilitation of offenders including problem-solving courts and restorative justice while maintaining the safety of the general population.

VI. Education

Mesa County Democrats:

- support a public educational system that meets the physical and mental health needs of students, including during remote learning as needed.
- support school boards that are independent of undue political and/or religious influences.
- support and call for the repeal of the Gallagher and TABOR amendments and restoration of Amendment 23 to reestablish adequate funding for Colorado’s ailing public education system. Fair and equitable funding for education will benefit all citizens and the State of Colorado, including Mesa County. It is currently not being provided and needs to be addressed by the legislature.
- support a robust program of building new schools and remodeling existing schools to create safe learning environments. We support that all schools are built and run with Green School sustainability standards.
- believe that improvement to Colorado public education should include universal preschool and better programs for students of all abilities, including those for ethnically diverse students and those students who fall within parameters for Title 1 funding. Such programs should include dual-language immersion and other successful models.
- oppose educational vouchers and tax credits for private schools, as they divert tax dollars away from public education, thus diminishing financial support for Colorado’s public schools.
- support fact-based and impartial news. We support the teaching of critical thinking in our schools so future voters of the digital age know where and how to check media facts. We oppose restriction of books or other material based on political, religious, or other controversial issues.

- support funding for two years of free post-secondary and/or vocational education as well as a reduction in student loan fees and interest throughout the course of undergraduate and graduate studies. In today's world, post-secondary education is critical for the success of our students and integral to the transformation of our economy. College loan debt is crippling the ability of university graduates to fully participate in the modern economy and discouraging entry into critical professions.
- support the rights of teachers to collectively negotiate for better working conditions as well as equitable pay and benefits. Teachers should be compensated for experience and additional education. Funding should be provided for teachers to attain continuing education credits.
- support educators' freedom to exercise autonomy and creativity in the classroom to meet students' needs. We support only the most judicious use of standardized testing because it unnecessarily stresses financial and human resources and reduces the student/teacher contact time essential to learning in all subject areas.
- encourage multilingual education starting at the elementary education level to prepare students for their future roles in a global society. This promotes inclusiveness, economic success, and national security.

2022 Platform Committee:

Tom Acker	Carol Cooper
Scott Beilfuss	Beverly Hart
Bobbie &	Peggy North
Boz Bozworth	Jennifer Rhamy
Constance Combs	David Stahlke

The Colorado Democratic Party 2022 Platform is available at: [Colorado Democratic Party Platform](#)