

Mesa County Democratic Party 2024 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 Mesa County Democratic Party (MCDP) believes that the best way to embrace the founding principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence and to honor and respect the rule of law established by the Constitution is to maintain and support a robust democratic process where every person has equal opportunity to cast their vote easily and effectively. We must always seek the broadest possible participation in our democracy and ensure that every vote counts. “We the People” means what it says, and it means all of us.

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

- I. *Democracy and Governance*: The role of government is to protect equity among citizens, including rights afforded by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America and voting rights. Voting is a citizen’s most important constitutional right. The government - local, State, and Federal - should represent all citizens.
- II. *Economy*: MCDP supports 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. *Environment and Climate Change*: Every Mesa County resident deserves clean air, safe and secure drinking water, public lands, and communities free from the harm of toxic extraction sites. Global climate change is an emergency. It calls us to action for the lives and futures of everyone.
- IV. *Health Care*: MCDP supports affordable, accessible, and comprehensive universal health insurance and coverage for all. We define health as a holistic concept incorporating physical, mental, and environmental health.
- V. *Education*: A strong public education system, preschool through post-secondary education, with adequate and equitable funding and independent from political influences, is essential to creating an informed democratic society.
- VI. *Quality of Life*: MCDP supports a quality of life for all that includes affordable food and housing, public safety, clean water, accessibility to amenities, open space and recreational opportunities, a strong agricultural community, and a welcoming and tolerant community based on fairness and equality.

I. Democracy and Governance

The Mesa County Democrats:

- demand that governance uphold fundamental principles of freedom of religion and separation of church and State. We believe all persons are entitled to equal treatment under the law regardless of race, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation and/or gender identity.
- affirm that religious speech is protected under the First Amendment and that religious practices should not infringe on the human rights or safety of LGBTQ+ individuals. We further affirm that any legislation or ordinances which force anyone to embrace any religious belief or practice is also barred by the First Amendment.
- oppose all efforts to suppress voter participation and to block access to the voting process. We support the Vote Without Fear Act, maintaining same-day registration, universal mail-in ballots, and ample drop-off boxes.
- support the Election Security Act that ensures our elections are run by competent, knowledgeable officials and provides means to prevent insider threats. We support fair and publicly funded elections including campaign finance reform that eliminates “dark money” from the process. We support the overruling of Citizens United.
- support establishing a National Federal Elections Holiday, ranked-choice voting, and replacing the State/Mesa County caucus nominating system with a more accessible primary election.
- affirm the right of LGBTQ+ individuals to move freely in all public spaces and be treated with dignity and respect in the judicial system.
- believe immigration and migration is vital to America’s economic prosperity and support immigration system reform as the current systems fail 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.
- endorse a fair and equitable pathway to citizenship and support Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program recipients and their families.
- support a strong national defense to protect our republic and freedoms and support democratic governments around the world. We support the North Atlantic Organization (NATO) and the Compacts of Free Association (COFA). We support Ukraine’s actions to defend itself and support aid to assist them in that

effort. We support treaties to limit nuclear weapons, recognizing that such treaties must include all nations that possess such weapons.

- affirm the right of two-spirit people to express their identity and indigenous cultural heritage.
- support expansion of the County Commission to five commissioners from the present three, with three to be elected by voters living in their own district and two elected at-large. We support lowering the number of required signatures for independent candidates to get on the ballot from 1000 to 500.

II. Economy

The Mesa County Democrats:

- support assisting workers displaced by the transition away from polluting 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 the ability of Mesa County to retain its 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. We approve the repeal of the Gallagher amendment and support reform of TABOR.
- support the implementation of bike and multi-modal transportation plans to connect all areas of the County, enhance lifestyle options and reduce car traffic.
- 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 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 all. Access is vital to economic competitiveness and individual success.
- support developing and growing minimal-impact manufacturing and technology industries locally that pay livable wages, are supported by local training and education programs and fit with our resources, and that desire to preserve our environment and labor force.
- support aggressively growing young family and workforce affordable housing options to bring in our future workforce.
- support a program of student loan forgiveness or reimbursement for professionals, such as doctors, veterinarians, lawyers, accountants, and engineers, who agree to live and work in rural communities for a period of years to expand access to these services and to promote rural economic development and quality of life.
- 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 sustainable and organic agricultural programs in all Western Slope educational institutions.
- support the promotion of “field-to-fork” programs for locally grown products.
- 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. Environment and Climate Change

The Mesa County Democrats:

- support accelerating the development and installation of renewable energy sources and phase out of fossil fuel development. We also support the funding of large-scale workforce career training to transition into renewable energy jobs.
- 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, and recycling of all plastics toward the elimination of all single-use plastics.
- 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 the adoption of gray water recycling systems in Mesa County and establishing strict limitations on industrial use of fresh water for fracking and other dangerous practices including restricting new developments for which there would be inadequate permanent water sources.
- 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 in residential, public, and commercial buildings.
- support reducing the use of public lands for carbon-emitting extractive industries. We support the continuation of public comment periods on public land issues.
- encourage adoption of conservation measures, informed decisions regarding landscaping in arid environments, and use of organic and natural fertilizers and/or natural pesticides.
- support programs to provide alternate transportation corridors including non-motorized access to State parks and wildlife areas, bird viewing, and other recreational activities.

- support the Clean Water Act of 1972. The Colorado and Gunnison Rivers and their tributaries are an irreplaceable resource in arid Mesa County.
- 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 The Riverfront Project and other efforts to connect community resources, open spaces, and parks by completing recreational trails along the greenways of our rivers.
- support the creation of Dolores River Canyonlands National Monument.
- support the expansion of preparations for wildfire events and wildfire mitigation as the danger of wildfires increases.
- support the protection of Mesa County's diverse flora and fauna to preserve adequate corridors for wildlife where they breed, feed or winter. We support legislation protecting keystone species in our County.

IV. Health Care

The Mesa County Democrats:

- believe healthcare is a fundamental human right and support health care equity for all races, ethnicities, faiths, legal statuses, genders including LGBTQ+, languages including sign language, and disabilities.
- believe health care should include dental, auditory, visual and gender-affirming benefits. We encourage Congress to authorize public health care to negotiate pharmaceutical and medical device costs.
- support incentives to train, recruit and increase the number of medical practitioners, including primary care providers, to bridge the gap between population health needs and available services. We define health as a holistic concept including physical, mental, and environmental health.
- believe in a 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 reproductive information, services, and family planning must be readily and easily accessible to all genders and ages.

- believe mental health is a key component to overall health and well-being. We support the expansion of accessible mental health services including 24-hour crisis services.
- 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 in locations such as public schools.
- support the development of a robust mental health workforce and programs to help encourage new professionals and to maintain existing professionals through legislative measures. We support the addition of qualified mental health professionals partnering with emergency services.
- support substance abuse and addiction treatment available to all. We support alternate sentencing for drug offenders to get them into addiction treatment.
- support adequate assisted living and skilled nursing resources for those who need them. Resources should include companies who accept public funding.
- believe in the individual right to die with dignity and support providing access to the means to fulfill that dignity as prescribed by law.

V. Education

The Mesa County Democrats:

- support a public educational system that meets the physical and mental health needs of students, including remote learning and LGBTQ+ youth.
- 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 the teaching of critical thinking in our schools so future voters of the digital age know where and how to check media facts.
- oppose restriction of books or other material based on political, religious, or other controversial issues.
- support school boards that are independent of undue political and/or religious influences.
- support educators' freedom to exercise autonomy and creativity in the classroom to meet students' needs.

- 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.
- support a robust program of funding new schools and remodeling existing schools to create safe learning environments and ensure all schools are built and run with Green School sustainability standards.
- encourage multilingual education as it promotes inclusiveness, economic success, and national security, starting at the elementary education level to prepare students for their future roles in a global society.
- support teachers' rights 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.
- believe 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 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.

VI. Quality of Life

The Mesa County Democrats:

- support our rural community and our small farms. We encourage the continued implementation of, and education around, sustainable approaches to agriculture. We support economic incentives for new farmers.
- support focused efforts to eliminate food deserts in Mesa County by encouraging easier year-round access to locally grown food.
- support the Master Land Use County Plan that protects our historical agricultural heritage and 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 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. We affirm the right to work, shop, travel, and learn without discrimination.

- support women’s rights, including the right to make one’s own health choices.
- support affordable childcare programs and robust senior services.
- 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. We support responsible gun ownership and training and the development and implementation of “smart gun” technology.
- support the implementation of a comprehensive universal background check on all gun purchases, prohibiting sales to individuals with a history of domestic abuse, mental illness, and prior legally designated violent crimes.
- 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.

2024 Platform Committee:

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