

FAMILY SECURITY

Security for Our Families

Texas Democrats support initiatives to ensure the security of our families. Every parent should be able to provide housing, nutrition, clothing and health care for his or her family. Therefore we support:

- Raising the minimum wage to reflect at least \$15 per hour so that a full-time, 40-hour a week job can adequately care for a family;
- Expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act which would save the lives and health of many hard working Texans, provide much needed additional funding for our hospitals, help relieve pressure to raise property taxes and add hundreds of billions in economic impact to our economy;
- Paid parental leave for fathers as well as mothers without regard to marital status or sexual orientation.
- Aggressive legislation aimed at protecting our elderly and disabled from abuse and exploitation.
- The right of families and communities everywhere to produce, process, access, distribute, and eat healthy food and to understand the sources, quality, and nutritional value of their food regardless of race, class, gender, ethnicity, citizenship, ability, religion, or community.

Privatization of Social Services

Under Republicans, Texas entered into a series of questionable contracts with private companies that have reduced and harmed state services and thereby thwarting attempts by Democrats to improve the lives of the people of Texas. Therefore, we support:

- Ending and banning any agreements with any contractor that has relocated outside the United States to evade taxes;
- State agencies hiring state workers at adequate levels to ensure timely and accurate delivery of state services.

Child Protection and Foster Care

The Department of Child Protective Services (CPS) is in crisis. The underfunding, understaffing and turnover inside CPS is literally putting the lives of our most vulnerable Texans at risk on a daily basis. Given the existing emergency Texas Democrats support:

- Calling an emergency session of the Legislature to consider a broad-spectrum, across the board overhaul of the Department of family and Protective services;
- Greater oversight of private and state facilities and institutions that serve children and vulnerable adults;
- Sufficiently funding CPS to reduce caseloads, ensure compliance with federal guidelines for caseworker/client meetings and adequately compensate experienced caseworkers to reduce turnover;
- Child protective programs that provide safe, secure environments for children and ensure there is no discrimination in the foster care system;
- We oppose any privatization of the child protective system including intake services;
- We support adoption of children by loving qualified parents regardless of marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and the rights of families created by those adoptions.

Long-term Services and Support

Texas Democrats believe that elderly and disabled Texans of all ages should have access to long-term services and supports that promote independent living in the most integrated setting possible. We believe the state must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Therefore we support:

- transitioning the long-term care system to focus on home and community based services (HCBS);
- creating a national HCBS program where funding for services "follows the person";
- fully funding all HCBS programs and ending all waiting lists for community services;
- protecting individual homesteads from repossession when recovering the cost of long-term care;
- providing elderly and disabled Texans with choices about where they want to live and receive support services;
- coordination of accessible, affordable, integrated housing and other support services;
- establishing a registry of direct service and providers and developing a training and certification program that interfaces with similar initiatives;
- access to non-medical services to contain cost and allow greater individual control;
- provide at least a \$15-an-hour living wage and health benefits to all direct care workers;
- effective oversight of the Dept. Of Aging and Disabilities;
- appropriate Medicaid reimbursement rates for long-term care; and

- the provision of sufficient resources for additional random audits, facilities inspections and ombudsmen.

Social Security

Texas Democrats believe that we must maintain the promise of Social Security and keep the system strong and certain for all working Americans. Therefore we support:

- That all Americans who have paid (or whose family members have paid) into the system should receive the benefits those payments should entitle them to regardless of other systems they may benefit from including but not limited to Texas Teacher Retirement;
- As the vast majority of earners pay into the system from the first to last dollar earned that a more level playing field requires raising or removing the income caps;
- CPI-E should be used for calculating cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for the elderly;
- The maintaining of smaller town Social Security offices;
- The maintaining of Social Security as a program of the federal government.

Retirement Security

Millions of workers have invested in public or private pensions to secure their retirement. We believe it is a legitimate role of government to protect the position of stakeholders in these pension systems.

Therefore we support;

- legal protections for participants in any retirement system for the full amount to which they are entitled;
- automatically freezing funds of companies filing for bankruptcy or encountering legal problems to keep funding for the pension plan in place;
- putting in place time limits to allow the expedient transfer of pensioners' funds to the pensioner within the confines of IRS regulations;
- state Retirement Systems be preserved as defined benefit systems consistent with the Texas Constitution; and
- federal employees retiring under Federal Employee Retirement System be treated the same as Civil Service retirees for purposes of sick-leave credit.

Access to Affordable Property Insurance

Democrats believe that Texans must have access to insurance protecting our homes and businesses at an affordable rate. Therefore we support:

- strict enforcement of policies requiring companies to justify rates or roll them back;
- providing the Insurance Commissioner the authority to deny or approve rates;
- eliminating unfair underwriting practices such as redlining, the use of credit scoring and other discriminatory practices; and
- greater consumer representation on the Insurance Commission.

Utility Regulation

Democrats understand that Texans must have affordable utilities and deregulation has failed to drive down rates and has produced an always confusing and often times misleading marketplace.

Therefore we support:

- Requiring the Public Utility Commission to construct policies that force all providers to display all products using the same language terminology and industry measurements, including cancellation policies, to describe those products so that they might be easily understood and compared.

Consumer Protection

Texas Democrats believe government has a responsibility to protect the people from dangerous products and fraudulent, unfair and discriminatory business practices. Therefore we support:

- repealing laws and regulations that restrict redress for buyers of new homes that discover shoddy work after the purchase is completed;
- stricter laws targeting unscrupulous telemarketing, internet marketing and price fixing;
- the rights of communities to provide public utilities at their discretion including "wi-fi" internet access; and
- the elimination of predatory lending practices particularly payday loans and sell/lease back transactions.

Housing

Texas Democrats believe quality, affordable housing strengthens families and revitalizes communities. As the population of Texas continues to grow, the importance of housing policy extends beyond the critical value of shelter. Quality, affordable housing improves school performance, diminishes health problems for both children and adults, and decreases psychological stress – among other benefits. We support:

- increasing investment of public funds to expand the supply of housing that is affordable and accessible to lowest income households;
- establishing housing stability as the primary purpose of low-income housing policy, which views allowing Texans to live in the neighborhood of their choice as foundational to good health, employment, educational achievement, and child well-being;
- continuing and improving programs that promote concrete resources to advance the dream of homeownership for all Texans; and
- ensuring the housing needs of our most vulnerable Texans, including persons with disabilities, persons experiencing homelessness, persons living with HIV/AIDS, seniors, youth, children, and families, is a priority in all housing policy decisions.