

Democratic Women's Clubs of Florida, Inc. 2005 Platform

1 **I. Preamble**

2 WE, the members of the Democratic Women's Club of Florida, come together
3 to declare our vision as Democrats for the great State of Florida. We join
4 our fellow Floridians in the pursuit of liberty, equality, prosperity and
5 personal satisfaction in our lives and livelihood. We are mindful of the
6 challenges the people of our state face daily; therefore, we commit ourselves
7 not only to the task of seeking solutions, but to taking the very real steps
8 necessary to make our vision a reality. From every walk of life, we rejoice
9 in our ability to come together in this common cause.

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11 **II. Secure in Our Future**

12 As residents of Florida, we share a vested interest with future
13 generations in protecting the diversity that makes Florida great. We
14 recognize taxes as the price we pay for living in one of the most beautiful
15 states in the greatest nation in the world. We do our utmost to preserve our
16 environment, secure our homes and create infrastructure for those who come
17 after us. We honor those who came before us, those whose sacrifices built
18 bridges, schools, hospitals and roads. We support a government in Florida
19 that will invest our portion wisely-- protecting our future, rather than
20 catering to special interests and projects for the privileged.

21 In our own lives, we are forced to make tough choices each day on how to
22 invest our time and money. We claim the right to hold elected officials to
23 the same high standards. Taxes should be assessed equally, fairly and
24 accurately at all levels. We believe funds that we have entrusted to the
25 government, through taxes, should be used for the purposes for which they are

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1 allocated and that trusts should be irrevocable, rather than pots to be
2 plundered.

3 As Floridians, we know that the future of our state depends upon each of
4 us doing our part to secure a stable economy, emphasize the building of a
5 well-trained work force and protecting the natural environment that provides
6 us with clean air, fresh water and ever changing beauty.

7 We call upon our Economic Development Councils to seek out clean
8 industries, to support the development of eco-tourism and businesses with zero
9 or neutral impact on our environment. Our families suffer without jobs that
10 provide a living wage; therefore, we charge local governments to ensure
11 companies pay a living wage for every employee before concessions are made to
12 attract a business or industry and that affordable housing will be available
13 so that employees can live in the communities in which they work.

14 We come from all corners of Florida, but one thing we each acknowledge
15 is that growth should be sustainable and mutually beneficial. There are
16 checks and balances already in place to assure that the infrastructure needed,
17 including roads, sewers, water, emergency services such as fire and rescue,
18 schools and jobs, are already in place before new growth is approved. We
19 recognize the impact of new development and support development paying for
20 itself through impact fees and a fair share of taxes. We take to task those
21 who would sell our future for a fleeting reward or personal gain.

22 Our veterans, active duty military and National Guard members know the
23 price of freedom is often bought with blood. As patriots, we seek first to be
24 the world's peacemakers. We know our soldiers will bravely go where we send
25 them. We owe it to our men and women in uniform to be sure our
cause is just, that the lives we save will far exceed the lives we lose and

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that the price our soldiers' pay is justified.

We call upon those who represent us to deal fairly and even-handedly with one another and foreign nations, so that those who would make war with us will find no justification in the eyes of the world. When calling upon our soldiers to risk their lives, we are committed to seeing they are well-trained, fully equipped, fully supplied and supported.

III. Quality Health Care for all Floridians

As doctors, nurses, licensed practitioners and medical assistants, we strive to provide the best possible care available. We understand the need of each citizen to have a personal relationship with a trustworthy health care provider. We honor the sacred relationship between health care providers and their patients, realizing that all citizens deserve to be treated with dignity and should possess the freedom to make informed decisions about their own care and treatment options, as long as they are able, and when unable to make those decisions, to have a trusted person to make necessary medical decisions without interference from state or federal authorities. We know the value of honest, factual education on issues including dietary needs, human sexuality, communicable diseases and ideas for living a longer, healthier life.

As women, we cherish our right to control our own bodies. We support programs designed to empower women, men, girls and boys with age-appropriate, medically accurate information on family planning, all birth control options, and reproductive choices, including the morning after pill and abortion; as well as, information on sexual health. We support full access to quality prenatal, obstetrical, post partum, neonatal and pediatric care.

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1 As citizens of Florida, we delight in our diverse population and look
2 toward a system of health care that provides each person access to health
3 care according to his/her needs. We understand that health care is too great a
4 commodity to be limited to those who can afford the high cost of insurance,
5 treatment and prescription drugs. We recognize the needs of Floridians to be
6 secure in their ability to have affordable treatment and medication; to be
7 confident that, should they need help, Florida stands ready to provide them
8 with the life-giving treatments they need. We applaud efforts to assure that
9 our elderly and infirm are treated with respect and care.

10 As researchers and practitioners, we seek out a haven for the
11 development of new treatments, therapies and drugs that can provide a better
12 quality of life or a more peaceful end. We challenge politically motivated
13 decisions that affect our ability to pursue scientific studies or treat our
14 patients.

15 In our communities, we work as advocates for the mentally ill and drug
16 dependant. We come together recognizing the special needs of families dealing
17 with addiction or the mentally ill, calling for programs that handle mental
18 illness and drug dependency as medical issues before they become criminal
19 justice problems. We know this transition from criminal justice to health
20 care is morally correct and fiscally sound.

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22 **IV. Public Education and the Pursuit of Learning**

23 The members of the Democratic Women's Clubs of Florida, Inc support the
24 life-long pursuit of learning, acknowledging education as the great social
25 equalizer. To encourage lifelong learning, we support free, accessible,

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1 adequately funded public libraries. We believe in the right to privacy for
2 library patrons. We defend increasing state funds to the public school system
3 and advocate equal access to post high school funding for all Florida
4 residents. We challenge the use of public funds for private institutions,
5 believing rather that we should bolster the public system to better meet the
6 individual needs of the student.

7 Through our voice, our vote and our spirit of volunteerism, we maintain
8 the importance of early childhood learning provided in partnership among the
9 parents, the community, and qualified educators. We support the development
10 of special needs programs in our public schools, including curricula designed
11 for those with emotional, physical, mental or social challenges and those with
12 exceptional talents. Further, we support vocational programs and
13 apprenticeships that prepare Floridians to take their place in the workforce.

14 As concerned citizens, we recognize the importance of the teachers in
15 our classrooms; we seek the best and the brightest teachers available, knowing
16 their contribution to the future of Florida is limitless. Our emphasis must
17 be on providing equitable salaries, incentives for teaching and supplying
18 classrooms with the highest quality materials available.

19 As educators, we value the administrators and support staff who make it
20 possible for us to provide the most conducive atmosphere for learning. We
21 honor the job they do, the organization they provide and community support
22 they foster.

23 We challenge any barriers to higher education, including the felony
24 preclusion to receiving Bright Futures Scholarship dollars. We accept the
25 value of private partnerships with our schools and universities, but believe

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1 that discoveries, inventions and patented formulas belong to the taxpayers of
2 Florida who fund our facilities and student scholarships.

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4 **V. Protecting Florida's Environment**

5 From the Panhandle to the Keys, each day we risk losing another portion
6 of our native lands to over-development, widespread pollution and the
7 foreseeable consequences of irresponsible human actions. As stakeholders in
8 the future of Florida, we emphasize the need to enforce strong environmental
9 protections through whatever means necessary. We call for closing the
10 loopholes that allow the pollution of our waterways, our coastlines and the
11 very air we breathe. Even with strong protections in place, a lack of
12 enforcement and a "look the other way" attitude threaten the very state we
13 hold dear.

14 We support the acquisition and maintenance of public lands, not only for
15 public parks and recreation but to preserve natural habitats and the pristine
16 beauty of wild, native Florida.

17 We applaud programs designed to help Floridians be better caretakers of
18 the state we have chosen to call home, from home and industrial recycling to
19 smart packaging to reduce the buildup of waste. We rise to the challenge of
20 finding new ways to dispose of the millions of pounds of waste produced each
21 year, before more of our precious acreage is used for landfills.

22 We encourage our businesses and universities to create alternative fuel
23 sources to reduce our dependence on oil and ways to reverse the damage done by
24 our reliance on fossil fuels.

25 We look toward the agricultural community to partner with us to reduce
the amounts of herbicides and pesticides used in farming; to help us bring to

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1 market abundant produce and meats free of chemicals, additives and hormones
2 potentially harmful to people and our land.

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4 **VI. Let the Punishment Fit the Crime**

5 Each of us desires to be safe in our homes. We acknowledge the rights
6 of law-abiding citizens to protect themselves by use of appropriate force, to
7 own guns and to secure themselves. To provide for the common welfare, we seek
8 well-trained, physically fit, educated law enforcement officers to work within
9 well-equipped, cooperating agencies.

10 We recognize our duty to provide the men and women of law enforcement
11 with our full support and we demand that they hold themselves to the highest
12 standards. We have no tolerance for abuse of authority in any capacity on any
13 level, but least of all in those sworn to protect and serve us. We cherish
14 the idea that a person is innocent until proven guilty and require our law
15 enforcement officers to hold this ideal paramount in their dealings with those
16 accused of a crime.

17 We recognize acts of violence against women and children as a serious
18 problem and we support programs that protect women and their children and
19 legislation that holds the offender accountable. We believe in the adoption
20 of programs designed to change the behaviors and patterns of abuse.

21 We recognize poverty or perceived poverty as a motivator for much of the
22 petty crimes committed among us. Through access to education and economic
23 development we hope to lift the burden of poverty, eliminating many
24 economically motivated crimes. But, for those who would seek to victimize us,
25 we say, "Let the punishment fit the crime".

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1 Recognizing the vast overcrowding in our jails and prisons, combined
2 with the high cost of incarceration, we seek alternatives to confinement such
3 as restitution and community control for those who commit property crimes or
4 theft. We acknowledge the harm created by drug abusers and those suffering
5 from mental illness. We seek ways to treat individuals' medical issues, while
6 seeking accountability for the real crimes they committed.

7 Prisons protect us from those most dangerous to society and, therefore,
8 the cost of housing them should fall upon the community. We challenge the
9 privatization of prisons and uphold the idea that prisons should be used to
10 house those who have been proven to pose a quantifiable threat to our
11 citizens; therefore, the burden of housing them should fall upon the very
12 people being protected. We agree that there are some people who should live
13 out the remainder of their natural lives in prison. As just and compassionate
14 people we believe that those persons incarcerated should be treated humanely
15 and guarded by the highest caliber of correctional officers.

16 Prosecutors hold the lives of real people in their hands, and
17 prosecutorial discretion in filing charges should be used with an even hand,
18 applying the same standards regardless of race, gender or social economic
19 status. Sentences should be meted out by judges and juries fully informed of
20 the details of the crime. While the rights of the accused should not outweigh
21 the rights of the victim, we have a duty to assure each person is granted
22 equal access to a quality defense - regardless of their circumstances. As a
23 free society, we cannot bear the burden of one innocent person being found
24 guilty of a crime of which they are innocent. Since death is irreversible,
25 and since the justice system is administered by humans and thus prone to
error, we urge that prosecutors be charged to give all due consideration to

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1 any new exculpatory evidence at any stage of the process prior to execution of
2 a sentence, therefore, we strongly support the ability of the accused to
3 access DNA testing, regardless of their ability to pay and without time
4 constraints.

5 While there needs to be a punitive element to committing a crime, as
6 criminal justice workers, mental health professionals and concerned citizens,
7 we emphasize the importance of rehabilitating those who have committed a crime
8 and who would benefit from education and training. We desire to receive
9 prisoners back into our communities, trained and fully prepared through re-
10 entry programs and half-way houses, to take a meaningful place in society. We
11 strongly support the full restoration of civil rights to former felons upon
12 the completion of their sentences, allowing them to hold meaningful jobs and
13 participate in the electoral process.

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15 **VII. Equality for all Floridians**

16 We cherish living in a nation that is governed "for the people and by
17 the people." Florida is stronger for its diverse cultures, ethnic flavor, big
18 cities and small towns. To us, equality does mean equal pay for the same
19 day's work. It means equal access to the political system through our ability
20 to vote, hold office, demonstrate and petition the government for the redress
21 of grievances. We hold fast to the notions that voter registration should be
22 simple, that polling locations should be easily accessible, that election laws
23 should be fair and that our ballots be clear, easy to understand and always
24 have a voter- verifiable paper trail. We believe these things to be the
25 cornerstone of a true democracy. Recognizing the importance of equal access
to government, we support the drawing of legislative districts by a non-

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1 partisan commission. Equality embodies the rights of the individual to be
2 free of unnecessary intrusion by Government. It means equal access to
3 benefits provided by the Government and the private sector, such as health
4 insurance and inheritance, to those united by domestic partnerships, or by
5 marriage and their children. Equality means the freedom to worship as we
6 choose when we choose and how we choose or not at all. It means the equal
7 application of respect for our agenda by those elected to represent us, even
8 if they disagree, and we challenge those in office to constantly seek us out
9 to hear our concerns. Equality means having the right to enter into
10 contracts, be represented in court, and have equal benefits regardless of our
11 race, age, gender, or socio-economic status.

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