



The Hoosier Promise

2022 INDIANA DEMOCRATIC
PARTY PLATFORM

Indiana Democrats: Creating a Better Future for Hoosier Families

The Indiana Democratic Party is committed to building a brighter tomorrow for Indiana and Hoosier families. Our state is at a crossroads, and rather than meddle in the controversy of the day, Indiana Democrats are getting to work and delivering opportunities for the families that call Indiana home – no matter the county or size of community.

Democrats are getting things done. Since the start of the Joe Biden-Kamala Harris Administration, Hoosiers like U.S. Congressmen André Carson and Frank Mrvan have time and again stood up for Hoosier families when it mattered most. Both members of Congress got to work and delivered transformative, once-in-a-generation investments that will forever change our lives and the communities we call home.

This started with the American Rescue Plan. Thanks to this COVID-19 relief package, all Hoosiers now have access to a vaccine, every single county in the state received necessary relief to make up for lost revenues, Indiana's cities and towns also saw critical relief to address long standing infrastructure or revenue needs, our first responders received funding to fight crime and keep our communities safe, Indiana's public schools saw funding streams return to levels not seen for more than a decade, educators *finally* received a pay raise, families received tax relief – lifting more than 80,000 of our kids out of poverty, the state's childcare system received \$540 million to fight its ongoing crisis, Governor Holcomb's READI program received \$500 million for state economic projects, and more than \$250 million was provided to expand broadband internet access across Indiana. There's no doubt the American Rescue Plan delivered for Indiana when it mattered most – and it was Indiana Democrats who answered the call to get it all done.

Democrats didn't stop there. Congressmen Carson and Mrvan also delivered on the opportunity to revitalize and forever transform Indiana's infrastructure system with The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. With their simple "YES" vote, Indiana's roads and bridges will receive about \$7 billion for repairs – reclaiming our "Crossroads of America" reputation, about \$751 million will be used to replace Indiana's water infrastructure system – delivering safe and clean water to all Hoosiers, more than \$680 million will be used to update public transportation systems in our cities, an additional \$100 million to further expand broadband internet, about \$100 million to expand the state's electric vehicle (EV) charging network, and \$20 million to help the state fight the impact climate change has on our communities.

Moreover, Democrats in the Indiana General Assembly delivered substantial criminal justice reform during the 2021 legislative session. Thanks to the leadership of the Indiana Black Legislative Caucus (IBLC), the systemic policies that have set Black and Brown Hoosiers back from a brighter future have begun to crumble, opening the doors to better opportunities for families in our marginalized communities. This means these reform policies will provide de-escalation training for officers, define chokehold tactics, hold officers accountable for misusing body cameras, and increase transparency of law enforcement disciplinary actions.

President Joe Biden and Indiana Democrats got all of this done in 2021. We delivered a better future for Indiana and Hoosier families in all 92 counties. The Indiana Democratic Party is the political organization that is getting stuff done, and we must not back down from the work we've accomplished. In fact, Democrats must be proud and travel to every community possible to celebrate this opportunity.

It's up to Indiana Democrats to share how we – not the Republicans – are getting to work and delivering for people. That's why last year, the state party held events in 55 counties celebrating the American Rescue Plan and The Jobs Act.

Here's the promise - "The Hoosier Promise" - Indiana Democrats can make for you: We will continue to visit communities in all 92 counties to share more news, because Indiana is at its strongest when all small towns and large cities thrive – and we're ready to show up regardless of political opportunity. There's more to accomplish to make Indiana the place for all Hoosier families to thrive, but it'll be the Democrats who will deliver on this brighter future. Take a look at the 2022 Indiana Democratic Party Platform [here](#) and join us in building this better tomorrow for the state we call home.

Creating Economic Success for All Workers, Hoosier Families

The facts don't lie. Indiana's economy is leaving Hoosiers behind. The cost of living keeps rising, but Hoosiers' incomes haven't kept up.

Hoosier Democrats are committed to ensuring families do not just make ends meet but thrive. To accomplish this, it's past time to dismantle the "work more for less" economy created by the Indiana Republican Party. Too many Hoosiers work more than one job just to put food on the table, and now is the moment to deliver livable wages for our workers and their families.

Here's the economic reality for Indiana. Thanks to the Indiana Republican Party, "[good jobs](#)" have left the state and have been filled by low-wage jobs. About [892,000 Hoosiers](#) earn a wage that's less than \$15.00 an hour. And because of the Republicans' "right to work" policies, the state's workforce has now earned an "[F](#)" [rating by economic experts](#).

The Republicans' short-changing economy must end. Democrats must be bold in identifying new and creative solutions to putting every Hoosier back to work in a good-paying career and work to ensure the workforce has the skills to succeed.

To restore this vision for the Indiana economy, Hoosier Democrats will fight to:

- Work to raise incomes in our state, including incrementally increasing the minimum wage to \$15/hour to ensure no person working 40 hours a week lives in poverty while minimizing the impact to small businesses. Earning a sustainable, livable wage allows working families to provide for their families, save for retirement, and get ahead.
- Continue the fight for equal pay for equal work, period.

- Institute a pay equity commission and highlight Indiana businesses that promote pay equity.
- Make two years of community college or technical training tuition-free for high-demand, high-wage positions aligned with local employers' needs for any individual.
- Look beyond renaming existing workforce development programs and target existing workforce training dollars to career-ready programs that teach the skills employers need now.
- Focus high-wage, high-growth economic development efforts to communities with high unemployment or that are underrepresented in traditional economic development efforts.
- Support education on women's rights and work with our women's organizations that support these efforts.
- Incentivize our state's best and brightest to call Indiana home by creating tax incentives for those graduating with degrees in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math).
- Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit and other savings vehicles for low-income Hoosiers.
- Invest in manufacturing to help small businesses purchase equipment and hire new workers through initiatives such as Manufacturing Reinvestment Accounts.
- Promote economic innovation through sustained investment in research and development.
- Ensure Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) can continue to work and access educational opportunities in Indiana, while recognizing the \$500 million in economic activity DACA recipients generate for the Hoosier economy.
- Support small businesses and startups in our state – especially those engaged in technological innovations that help diversify the Hoosier economy.
- Incentivize employers to hire unemployed and underemployed Hoosiers.
- Encourage an extensive evaluation of tax incentives, as well as the establishment of rigorous job creation and accountability standards for economic development tools offered by the state.
- Claw back any incentives or taxpayer dollars used by companies to offshore Hoosier jobs, and continue to hold accountable those members of the General Assembly who vote against these claw backs.

A Fair Deal for Hoosier Workers

The Indiana Democratic Party stands shoulder-to-shoulder with the efforts of our partners in organized labor to remain the foundation of the American marketplace. Now more than ever, workplace safety is critical as the country and our state grapple with COVID-19. We'll fight to repeal efforts to purposefully undermine Hoosier workers' right to organize and demand fair wages and safe working conditions.

Democrats will:

- Repeal “Right to Work”, restore the Common Construction Wage, and increase working Hoosiers’ incomes and boost local economies.
- Support efforts that close tax loopholes that encourage some corporations to ship American jobs overseas. It is unacceptable that our tax code awards incentives or taxpayer-funded contracts to companies that send Hoosier jobs to other countries.
- Crack down on unfair practices that lead to a loss of Hoosier jobs, including currency manipulation and other tactics that put Indiana manufacturers on an unfair playing field.
- Fully staff the Indiana Occupational Safety and Health Administration to enforce workplace safety guidelines that protect Hoosier workers.
- Enforce strong oversight of apprenticeship programs and work-based learning.
- Oppose unfair trade deals that ship American jobs overseas. We need fair trade, not agreements that have the potential to put American companies at a disadvantage and Hoosiers out of work.
- Support the passage and enforcement of state and federal laws ensuring workers the right to bargain collectively, including those who work in the public sector and simplify the process for workers to organize in a union.
- Encourage strong and swift penalties for violating labor laws and support banning permanent replacements of workers who strike responsibly.
- Ensure that any new trade agreements include strong standards on labor, the environment, and currency manipulation.
- Oppose any efforts that cancel labor agreements or any measure that endangers workers on the job.
- Work to restore workers’ rights to overtime, combat wage theft, fight the repeal of dues deduction laws, work to restore and enhance prevailing wage protections, and stop companies from mislabeling employees as “independent contractors” to avoid paying benefits and taxes.
- Empower the Indiana Civil Rights Commission to proactively fight pay discrimination at every level and once and for all ensure equal pay for equal work.
- Protect whistle-blowers reporting unsafe or unfair working conditions.
- Reform workers’ compensation to provide injured workers the resources they need to rejoin the workforce and increase compensation.
- Ensure out-of-work Hoosiers have access to adequate unemployment insurance to help them return to the workplace.
- Enforce “Buy American” provisions and ensure no waivers to Buy American procurement procedures.
- Fight for fair scheduling. Providing advance notice of schedules, allowing employees to request days and times without penalty, and providing premium pay for last minute changes or sending workers home early are a few of the strategies that would allow workers to better align their work schedule with childcare.

A World-Class Public Education System

Indiana’s Constitution guarantees a quality public education for every Hoosier child.

Public schools are the heartbeats of urban, suburban, and rural communities alike, and Republicans have failed to live up to this promise, and instead, they have put the health of Indiana's communities in jeopardy. Recent state budgets show Republicans want to dismantle public education. Whether it's consistently under-funding rural and urban public schools, denying educators a pay raise, and super-funding an unregulated school choice system – Republicans have created a state education system that earned a [“D+” grade by experts](#). This is an unacceptable grade, and Republicans are failing our children as well as Indiana's future.

It's time to focus on what's best for student learning again. It's past time the state addresses and solves the ongoing teacher shortage crisis. Moreover, the incessant misinformation and culture wars fueled by the Indiana Republican Party – including the crusade on nonexistent Critical Race Theory (CRT) curriculum – must end. For too long, political debates have outweighed what is best for students. It starts with respecting teachers, educational best practices, and returning the emphasis to the classroom.

Democrats will work to:

- Continue funding increases for public schools (provided by the American Rescue Plan) to ensure access to a balanced curriculum for all students and ensure access to highly effective teachers regardless of their Zip code.
- Invest in educators by continuing the pay raise to educators provided by the American Rescue Plan in the 2021 budget.
- End the practice of Hoosier taxpayer dollars funding private or for-profit schools.
- Eliminate the cost of textbooks and computers for families.
- Eliminate misinformation and political crusades about the state's curriculum in classrooms and school systems.
- Make sure the American Rescue Plan is closing the digital divide to ensure all students have equal access to technology and resources at school and at home through expanding broadband internet access, especially in rural and underserved areas.
- Individualize high school graduation plans and expand access to college and career-ready pathways. Ensure all students have a clear pathway to graduation that supports their ability to enter college or begin their career.
- Ensure classrooms across the state are equipped with the resources – both material and staff – to provide a top-quality learning environment. That includes funding for school counselors, psychologists, preschool educators, and social workers.
- Indiana should pursue providing the highest median teacher salaries of neighboring states by no later than 2025.
- Promote a positive learning climate for all students. End bullying so all students feel included regardless of their race, color, religion, creed, national origin, economic status, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity.
- Demand access for universal preschool across the state, including the expansion of preschool programs in all public school corporations.
- Make streamlined, individualized assessments that provide quick feedback to students, families, and educators that show performance and growth over the course of a school year optional.

- Balance teacher evaluations with more meaningfully derived criteria like locally-determined outcome goals.
- Restore collective bargaining on days and hours educators work while cutting down on schools' abilities to use false claims of deficit financing to restrict bargaining.
- Foster an environment of trust that embraces great teachers and encourages the best and brightest to enter the teaching profession.
- Engage families to increase the literacy rates of Hoosier children by embracing tried-and-true best practices.
- Ensure our schools continue to be safe for all Hoosier children by providing the resources and flexibility for local administrators to develop security solutions that work in their communities while providing adequate state funding.
- Ensure affordable and no-cost meals are available to public schools as needed and end the practice of meal debt-shaming.
- Promote the affordability of colleges, universities, and trade schools for all Hoosiers by ensuring that tuition, textbooks, and other material costs remain as low as possible.
- Expand the 21st Century Scholars program.
- Offer in-state tuition rates to DREAMers who received DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) status.
- Promote prevention and education programs that teach age-appropriate sex education. These programs should focus on medically accurate information for Hoosiers to protect themselves and others.

Invest in Hoosiers, Reduce the Cost of Living, and Develop a 21st Century Workforce

Our state's most valuable resource has always been Hoosiers. Time and again, Hoosiers have proved, with the right tools, our work ethic, ingenuity, and creativity are second to none. To compete in the global economy, the state government must create an economy that's reflective of the 21st Century by investing in Hoosiers and building strong, welcoming communities.

How Democrats achieve this:

- Ensure that every Hoosier worker has access to a minimum of two weeks of paid sick days.
- Promote the American Rescue Plan's Child Tax Credit for families that offsets the cost of childcare and reduces Hoosiers' cost of living with the goal of making Indiana the most affordable state for childcare.
- Incentivize stakeholders to create options in childcare deserts and for second and third shift workers.
- Create a comprehensive paid family leave program that allows new parents – both mothers and fathers – to spend time with their newborn or newly adopted child and for family members to care for an aging or sick loved one without the fear of losing a paycheck or failing to cover bills.

- Allow Hoosiers with student loan debt to refinance at the lowest rate possible and simplify and expand income-based repayment options.
- Develop an Indiana public service loan forgiveness program that offers a percentage of debt relief for up to five years of public service – including teaching.
- Ensure that any individuals making \$25,000 or less will not accrue interest on student loans and not be required to make payments.
- Incentivize Indiana higher education institutions to develop wraparound support services that increase on-time graduation of students.
- Dedicate resources to close the racial and ethnic gaps in postsecondary education completion and adult degree/certificate attainment by 2030.
- Pursue federal grants for higher education/training programs in high-demand, high-wage jobs.
- Find ways to encourage start-up investment and remove barriers to capital for Hoosier entrepreneurs.
- Fight to provide stable, affordable housing for Hoosiers in communities across the state. Stable housing is vital to success in employment and education.
- Reduce evictions by strengthening renter protections and develop incentives to increase affordable housing stock in rural, urban and suburban areas.

Safe and Strong Communities

Building safe and strong communities means examining past practices and ensuring every stakeholder has a seat at the table. For too long, Indiana has failed to look inward and confront policies that marginalize Hoosiers who identify as a person of color. It's time to move Indiana forward by creating a better future for everyone, not just the status quo.

Democrats firmly oppose the practice of racial profiling in all potential applications, especially as a law enforcement tool. We must celebrate the recent reforms passed by the Indiana Black Legislative Caucus in 2021 while also confronting and correcting systemic racism in housing, workplace, health care, environment, and safety policies.

We further call on all of our Democratic candidates who run for public office in the State of Indiana to include in their platform policies aimed at improving our communities in an equitable and just manner for Hoosiers of color and those in our community who have faced persistent and systematic discrimination. We are the political party that has for decades called for and worked to ensure the civil rights and liberties of communities of color. Democratic candidates are expected to listen to the needs of all diverse communities and build new paths that guarantee all Hoosiers prosperous, equal, and free lives. This commitment should be reflected in Democratic candidates' campaign organizations.

Democrats will:

- Lead a statewide reform of police departments' use of force policies to help ensure that officers deploy force proportionately, appropriately, and ensure community involvement in development and reviews of these policies.
- Immediately ban the use of law enforcement chokehold restraints.
- Push for the resources needed to implement the statewide use of police body cameras.
- Increased accountability and transparency of law enforcement complaints and use of excessive force.
- Establish a Statewide Criminal Justice Commission, including a diverse appointing of civilian representatives from the cities with significant African American populations, to examine every aspect of our state's criminal justice system and recommend comprehensive criminal justice reform, including the eradication of certain policing policies.
- Make it clear that Indiana does not condone acts of hate by strengthening Indiana's statewide hate crimes law.
- Attack Indiana's opioid epidemic by mustering state and local agencies to track, investigate, and prosecute pill mills and dealers. We will also focus on preventing and treating addiction.
- Expand on recent criminal code reforms to explore ways in which penalties can be more fairly assessed and ensure the criminal justice system is centered on rehabilitation and redemption.
- Study policies requiring that bail be set using evidence-based risk assessments to ensure low-income, low-risk offenders don't remain in jail simply because they can't afford bail, fines, or fees.
- Close the gun show and terrorist watch-list loophole and ensure every transaction involving the sale of a firearm includes a comprehensive background check.
- Strengthen child access prevention laws to ensure the safe storage of firearms.
- Take steps to reduce recidivism including expanding work release and education programs to help ex-offenders find jobs and reintegrate into society.
- Streamline the criminal record expungement process and make expungement assistance available at Department of Workforce Development Work One locations.
- Work with law enforcement agencies, health care groups, and other stakeholders to legalize medical and recreational marijuana use, decriminalize the possession of small amounts of marijuana, and automatically expunge the records of Hoosiers convicted of simple marijuana possession.
- Protect survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment, and stalking through legislation.
- Demand that Congress assumes its full oversight authority over ICE and take action by either reforming the agency through legislation or shifting responsibilities to other areas or agencies of government that may not be beholden to presidential administrations. A streamlined process must be put in place so the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is directed to provide a fair hearing in court, due process, and equal protection under the law. Common sense immigration policies can and should be developed, and previous abuses under ICE should never happen again.

Healthier Communities and Lowering the Cost of Health Care

The United States is the richest country on earth, yet we rank near last among industrialized countries in health care coverage.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), pre-existing conditions no longer mean a lifetime of medical debt, a loss of coverage, or worse. Further, the ACA installed a consistent streamline of funding to create the Healthy Indiana Plan 2.0 (HIP). Democrats must celebrate the Affordable Care Act and the long-term health care opportunities it provides to Hoosier families.

Democrats must also curb the rising cost of premiums and prescription drugs, preserve Medicare, and fight any efforts to decrease access to affordable health care. The Affordable Care Act isn't perfect and it's up to Democrats to make universal health coverage a reality for every American.

Further, Democrats must stem the rising tide of opioid addiction in our communities. Indiana's opioid overdose death rate has quadrupled since 1999. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates there are 109 opioid prescriptions for every 100 Hoosiers. And Indiana lags neighboring states in access to treatment. We must take proactive steps to end this scourge.

Democrats must:

- Lower health care costs by making premiums more affordable, reducing out-of-pocket expenses and capping prescription drug costs while maintaining protections for those with pre-existing conditions and prohibitions on lifetime coverage caps.
- Fight attempts to cap, block-grant, or eliminate critical funding for the Healthy Indiana Plan or HIP 2.0.
- Guarantee insurance companies cover basic health services, like mental health coverage, substance abuse coverage, maternity care, and prescription drugs.
- Adequately fund outreach programs to ensure Hoosiers know which health care options are available to them.
- Block any Republican effort to privatize, "voucherize," or phase out Medicare.
- Expand access to mental health and addiction treatment by preserving and expanding care options through HIP 2.0 and the Affordable Care Act. This includes supporting efforts to address the shortage of workers in the addiction treatment field.
- Develop a HIP 2.0 buy-in option for Hoosiers earning more than the allowable limits so they can retain health care coverage. This program allows working people to earn more income without the risk of losing vital health care coverage or provides an alternative for those with expensive employer-provided coverage. Any Hoosier with employer coverage whose premiums exceeds 9.86 percent of their income could instead purchase individual market coverage with financial assistance.

- Work with stakeholders and relevant state agencies to create opioid therapeutics - like cannabis - and treatment benchmarks to determine progress and success for those participating in treatment so the state can direct resources to the most successful options.
- Invest in community health centers, especially in traditionally underserved and rural areas. Expand coverage to cover the 16 Indiana counties without a hospital.
- Incentivize health practitioners, doctors, and nurses to work in rural and underserved areas through tuition forgiveness and other methods.
- Promote the health and safety of women and their families, including access to vital health services and care to obtain preventive and family planning services, including all forms of birth control and abortion.
- Stand with Hoosier women against legislation that further erodes any reproductive health care rights.
- Work to stop harmful legislation that puts women and Hoosier families' safety at risk by putting lawmakers between women and their doctors and endangering the doctor-patient relationship.
- Support efforts to reduce Indiana's high infant and maternal mortality rate, including ensuring access to affordable and ongoing medical and prenatal care, expanding postpartum coverage, and targeting implicit biases and other factors that contribute to unacceptably higher mortality rates for women of color.
- Fight against legislators forcing doctors to perform unnecessary medical procedures on patients.
- Fight for legislation that promotes medically accurate information be given to patients.

Equality and Justice for All: Protecting the Rights of All Hoosiers

The Indiana Democratic Party is proud of our longstanding commitment to and support for civil rights and equality. We support making the promise of "equal protection under the law" a reality for all Hoosiers - regardless of who they are.

Republican leaders at the General Assembly have invested too much time and taxpayer resources focused on divisive culture wars that send an unwelcoming message to those around us. These crusades - based on misinformation, conspiracy theories, and fear - further prove the Indiana Republican Party is bad for business, and their partisan efforts must end.

Democrats reaffirm our commitment to fully embrace Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, as well as full enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 for Hoosiers with disabilities and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.

The Indiana Democratic Party opposes all forms of discrimination based upon sexual orientation or gender identity and all efforts to enshrine discrimination in our state's Constitution. As Democrats, we oppose discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation and

we strongly support the adoption of a statewide policy barring discrimination against LGBTQ+ Hoosiers. To beat this effort, Democrats continue its call for the Indiana General Assembly to pass an all-inclusive hate crimes prevention legislation.

As Democrats, we believe that older workers are a vital part of the workforce and that prohibitions against age discrimination should be enforceable in the same manner and to the same extent as any other discrimination. We also continue to support legislation that would protect the freedom of all Hoosiers and create tougher penalties for those who infringe, criminally or otherwise, on those freedoms.

Democrats are concerned with accessibility issues for those with disabilities, including personal income limits and attaining and sustaining personal care when needed. We also believe that a state Family and Medical Leave Act should be ratified and that meaningful remedies be available when a person is subjected to discrimination and seeks redress under our state's civil rights statute. Further, Hoosiers should not be bound by their disabilities. Therefore, Democrats will advocate for a better environment for entrepreneurship and small business opportunities for Hoosiers with disabilities.

We believe those who wish to make a life for themselves and their families in Indiana should be afforded the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, it is unconscionable for any human being to be exploited or abused. Every Hoosier deserves to be treated with basic human decency and should be allowed to pursue the American Dream.

We believe that state and local governments, as well as the private sector, should create a truly diverse and inclusive economic infrastructure by making it a priority to buy goods and services from minority contractors.

Democrats are working to ensure that every Hoosier gets a fair shot to achieve the American Dream. For the sake of current and future generations, we feel it is our duty to put an end to any injustices that threaten that goal. In the Indiana Democratic Party, everyone has, and always will have, a voice.

Election Reform and Redistricting

To restore trust in government, the Indiana Democratic Party supports the right of every eligible Hoosier citizen to register to vote and cast a ballot without undue burden, fear, or intimidation.

As Hoosier Democrats, we:

- Oppose any politically-motivated efforts aimed at disenfranchising any voter of our state, including efforts to make it difficult for voters to obtain identification or restricting access to polling locations.
- Support expanded access to early voting through sufficient early voting sites across the state.

- Extend the hours polls are open to 6am-9pm on Election Day since Indiana has some of the shortest Election Day voting hours in the nation.
- Automatically register all eligible US citizens with an Indiana driver's license unless they choose to opt out and allow for same-day voter registration.
- Support the opportunity to vote by mail for all Hoosier voters without requiring an excuse to do so.
- Support redistricting reform to maximize voter participation and end the practice of gerrymandering, where politicians choose their voters, instead of the other way around.
 - The Indiana General Assembly must immediately create an independent redistricting commission that will draw maps based on legitimate legal factors and exclude political considerations.
- Advocate for reforms to campaign finance laws that disrupt the ability for all Hoosiers to participate in the political process and allow undue influence from outside interests and those with the deepest pockets. It's time for dramatic changes in campaign finance laws to eliminate the extraordinary influence exercised by special interests and the wealthy.
- Embrace all efforts to improve civic literacy, promote registration and increase turnout by urging our candidates and officeholders to join the Indiana Civic Health Alliance.

Securing the Future of Our Most Vulnerable

Every Hoosier deserves a fair shot at success, economic security, and earning a good living. The Indiana Democratic Party has a long and proud tradition of championing policies that provide Hoosiers with a launching pad to achieve their full potential.

We know that children live better lives when their families are strong. This is exactly why Democrats supported and passed the American Rescue Plan and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act - because these laws will deliver on that promise.

Democrats are committed to celebrating this better future we've created for families in all 92 counties. Whether it's employment, transportation, childcare, education, discrimination, or eldercare - Democrats are removing all potential obstacles that can prevent individuals from reaching their full potential in the workforce.

But our work does not stop there. The Indiana Democratic Party supports policies that will assist Hoosier families with these issues and provide opportunities to earn success. This means looking after our most vulnerable and creating policies to protect our children, including:

- Fully-funding the Department of Child Services (DCS) to achieve a meaningful decrease in child abuse and neglect and a significant reduction in deaths of abused and neglected children.
- Ensuring family case managers are properly trained and compensated and develop a tuition forgiveness program for college graduates who work for DCS.

Democrats have a moral obligation to take care of our nation's seniors, and after a lifetime of paying into these programs, we have a responsibility to ensure that both Medicare and Social Security are preserved for current and future retirees. We must ensure the state programs designed to help protect and support our Hoosier seniors are adequately funded.

The Indiana Democratic Party believes that vulnerable Hoosiers, including senior citizens and low-income families, must not be the victims of those who would take advantage of them through risky mortgages, loans, or identity and investment schemes. Hoosier families must be free from the fear of losing money to predatory lenders or dubious commercial enterprises. We should also recognize the importance of consumer protections by supporting efforts to bolster cybersecurity and fraud reduction.

As the Party that advocates for all Hoosiers, Democrats also understand that it's time to address one of the most crippling issues facing our families in all communities: addiction. Democrats stand for:

- Fully supporting adequate funding for substance abuse treatment and prevention services, including programs for prenatal substance abuse prevention and proven therapeutic opportunities - like cannabis.
- Fighting food insecurity and making it clear we are committed to a guarantee that, in the richest country in the world, no Hoosier should go hungry.

Conserving Our Land, Promoting Energy Independence

Indiana is the most chemically polluted state in the United States. This is simply unacceptable. We should be striving to protect and cherish our state's heritage and natural health now and in the future.

The Indiana Democratic Party believes in a strong, balanced approach to energy production and environmental stewardship and is keenly aware that our state's economy depends on healthy land. We believe a responsible and comprehensive energy policy should provide clean, affordable energy to Hoosier families and businesses while promoting domestic production and national security. We also must face the existential threat climate change poses to every element of our lives.

Luckily, Democrats have already begun this work. Thanks to The Jobs Act, more than \$100 million is being used to expand the state's electric vehicle (EV) charging network, making EV the future for Hoosier drivers. Further, about \$20 million will be used to help Indiana fight climate change the extreme weather Hoosiers have faced in recent years.

Hoosiers have a tremendous opportunity to contribute to the evolving energy economy. The production of renewable and alternative energy sources could create jobs and compete with conventional sources of power to drive down the cost of power, spur innovation, and preserve our land.

We also recognize Hoosier communities and our economy are built on the foundation of our natural resources—from Lake Michigan and the Hoosier National Forest to our rivers and streams and fertile farmland.

The Indiana Democratic Party believes that we must:

- Modernize and retool our state's economy to replace the manufacturing jobs that have vanished from Indiana. We must utilize the skills of our workforce to attract “green” manufacturing and invest in renewable energies, both of which will sustain the environment and provide high-skilled, high-paying jobs.
- Renewables are the fastest-growing segment of electricity generation. Align subsidies and regulations to accelerate the transition from dirtier and more expensive fuels to cleaner, less costly alternatives. The transition to renewables can help reduce the cost of living for working Hoosiers.
- Target investment to communities disproportionately impacted by offshoring or environmental injustice.
- Partner with labor and union workers to protect and expand jobs by developing apprenticeship pipelines and funding for retraining. We owe it to workers and communities who powered generations of economic growth. We will not leave workers behind.
- Identify and reduce Indiana's carbon footprint.
- Protect our state forests from unnecessary lumber harvesting and regularly audit our state's natural resources for long-term environmental sustainability.
- Promote energy efficiency programming across the state by restoring programs such as the Energize Indiana program.
- Promote clean energy transition and decrease our dependence on foreign energy resources, which poses a serious threat to our economy and our national security, and protect vulnerable communities from the effects of pollution. Fluctuating gasoline and natural gas create economic insecurity and force Hoosier families to make difficult sacrifices. Renewable energy can provide safe, reliable, and affordable power for all Hoosiers. Significant commitment to distributed renewable energy will also support the economic health and resilience of our communities.
- Support measures that will ensure and protect our supply of clean water and encourage comprehensive water consumption and groundwater protection plans.
- Communities of color are more likely to live in neighborhoods with higher concentrations of air pollution. They are disproportionately impacted by violations of clean water and air standards. Strengthen environmental justice by increasing the enforcement of clean air/water quality standards and providing the Indiana Department of Environmental Management the resources they need to rehire the appropriate staff.
- Restore funding cuts to IDEM's hazardous waste management program, Office of Water Quality, and inject \$35 million to return IDEM to its funding level from a decade ago, adjusted for inflation.
- Promote programs that encourage waste reduction and recycling.
- Increase investment in sustainable farming, fishing, forestry research, and other best practices.

- Become a leader in farmland preservation, air quality improvement, and economic growth.

A Comprehensive Approach to the Crossroads of America

Indiana's infrastructure has been crumbling. From outdated bridges to dial-up internet, Indiana lacks a true foundation for faster and more efficient modes of transportation. Local communities struggle to maintain what they have - let alone thinking about how to improve or expand.

Luckily, Indiana Democrats joined President Biden and delivered transformational infrastructure investments through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Because of this work, the state can reclaim its "Crossroads of America" reputation with extensive repairs to the state's roads and bridges. Indiana's public transportation systems will see a once-in-a-generation opportunity to update its infrastructure to fit a modern nation. Further, Indiana's water system will be overhauled so that all Hoosiers can enjoy safe and clean drinking water in their homes. Lastly, Democrats delivered more than \$350 million to expand broadband internet access across Indiana - thanks to The Jobs Act and the American Rescue Plan.

However, the work is never over and the Indiana Democratic Party strongly backs making significant and strategic investments in Indiana's infrastructure through the targeted use of federal and state dollars. Better transit options mean better access to good-paying jobs. Infrastructure investment is as critical to the Indiana economy as it is to Hoosier communities. In addition, we must:

- Develop a comprehensive approach that targets dollars to projects where investment leverages future growth, like expanded broadband internet access in rural communities or investment in water and wastewater infrastructure, where some communities still rely on wooden pipes.
- Ensure Hoosier taxpayers receive a fair share of federal transportation funding by maximizing available funding. Indiana currently receives 91% of its share of Highway Trust Fund contributions. We need to increase the rate of return on our tax dollars by leveraging federal funds so the State of Indiana and local governments have the infrastructure to support and attract businesses to Indiana.
- Study alternative methods to fund future infrastructure needs and move away from regressive funding mechanisms that place a higher burden on low-income and working Hoosiers.
- Attach stiff penalties to private sector partners that fail to uphold their end of any infrastructure deals or do not meet an agreed-upon timetable.
- Achieve our long-term infrastructure investment goals with an eye on Indiana's future, environmental sustainability, and the prosperity of our state for generations to come.

Honoring Our Veterans

The Indiana Democratic Party honors those who serve in the United States Armed Forces, as well as the Indiana National Guard and Air National Guard. The dedication of an individual in this service is the ultimate selfless act on behalf of one's state and country.

It is our steadfast belief that we must continue to be committed to giving our brave men and women the tools to succeed in whatever endeavor our nation faces, whether it's at home or abroad. We must help bridge the gap between military families and the benefits they've rightfully earned, such as quality, state-of-the-art health care access through the national Veterans' Affairs system.

Our Party is committed to providing our aging and newly returned veterans the benefits they have earned. Our duty to those who serve our nation does not end when they leave that service. We must guarantee that our veterans have access to the health benefits, education, and job opportunities we promised them.

This includes championing legislation that:

- Gives veterans assistance in the job market and makes it easier for businesses to hire those who serve our country.
- Incentivizes veterans to start new businesses and gives preference to veteran-owned businesses for state contracts.
- Manages services for women veterans and military families.
- Removes restrictive timeframes to give military families as much access to needed assistance as possible.
- Continues to focus on the growing problems of PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, and prevention of military suicides and deliver therapeutics that can be used to treat these health concerns - like cannabis. It is imperative that we respect, care, and prepare for new sets of challenges met by our veterans so that they may come home to Indiana and be successful.