

## **DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM**

### **Preamble**

Jefferson County Democrats believe that each of us has a personal responsibility for the well-being of our families, communities and ourselves. We believe that we elevate ourselves by reaching out to others, and that all citizens deserve dignity, respect and fair treatment. We believe that diverse people, ideas, backgrounds, cultures and lifestyles add to the excitement and value of living in Jefferson County.

We support Equal Opportunity Practices, including Affirmative Action, to achieve inclusiveness, diversity, and non-discrimination in all jobs, programs, services, and allocation of resources within Jefferson County with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, economic status, disabilities, religious affiliation or spiritual belief, and veteran status. We support the goal of making Jefferson County accessible and friendly for residents and visitors living with disabilities of any type.

We want to preserve the natural beauty of our county while encouraging a strong economy with jobs that enable families to sustain themselves with dignity.

Jefferson County Democrats believe that public education is a cornerstone of the American dream. We believe that education is a life-long process. Quality pre-schools, early childhood education, alternative education, technical schools, school-to-career projects and post-secondary education are essential to assuring opportunity, quality of life, a skilled labor force and a strong economy.

Jefferson County Democrats believe that individuals and communities with different views on important issues should come together to solve problems through consensus, before using the courts, special interest legislation or ballot initiatives. Problems should be solved locally whenever possible.

We believe that civil public dialogue builds strong communities and creates an atmosphere of tolerance for different points of view. Name calling, personal attacks, disdain for diverse opinions, rumor-mongering, disregard for local, state and federal laws and regulations are unacceptable behaviors from elected officials and advisory boards. We demand the utmost in integrity, ethics, professionalism and respect for the citizenry from those who do the county's business.

Jefferson County Democrats are committed to electing men and women who share our values and to continuing leadership roles at all levels of government. The following statements of position will guide our efforts in 2002.

### **Public Education**

The Jefferson County Democratic Party supports Public Education as a basic right of all Americans. We specifically support the efforts at each level of our county's publicly funded educational institutions to:

Achieve gender equity, eliminate gender stereotyping, and maintain compliance with Title IX.

Offer degree and vocational programs and/or certification for a wide range of students.

Provide facilities and programs for continuing education and community interest classes..

Counsel and direct students whose goals are best served by institutions outside the county.

Meet and surpass requirements of the state's education reform programs including WASL scores.

Support and encourage on-going staff training and proficiency.

Eliminate the super majority requirement for passing school levies.

Support public participation in public education through volunteerism, participation in governance, and attendance at school events.

Provide safe environments for students, staff and patrons within the schools through a No Tolerance Policy and to cooperate in the identification of abusive and neglectful behaviors toward children at school, at home and in the community.

Provide and increase numbers of quality early childhood education programs.

Support parenting training for teen and other at risk parents.

Implement early intervention and prevention to reduce substance abuse, truancy, delinquency, threats, and other abusive behaviors.

Provide fair benefits and working conditions for school employees through collective bargaining.

Improve staff and student education in diversity.

Provide facilities and programs to keep up with advances in vocational and technology education.

Keep citizens informed about district test scores, activities, curriculum, volunteer and employment opportunities, long range plans and financial status.

Provide adequate funding for top-quality education in our County, state, and country.

To reduce and maintain class sizes at twenty or fewer students.

Explore and fund alternatives to mainstreaming so that each student receives the best possible and appropriate education at the top of his or her level of competency.

Provide sufficient support services and counseling so that personal, social, academic, and post-graduate advising is available to every student.

Support provision of a broad variety of free or low-cost extra-curricular activities as an integral part of the school program.

Provide adequate recreational facilities for young people in every community.

Make arts education central to the education of students at every level through curriculum and support for extra-curricular activities.

### **Technology**

A county-wide technology strategy is vital to Jefferson County's competitiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We believe that an up-to-date technology infrastructure will benefit economic development, education, healthcare, good government and quality of life, and will make Jefferson County a more attractive place to live and work. Specifically, we support efforts to:

Move quickly and collectively to implement a modern broadband infrastructure that will benefit education, healthcare, business and grassroots community development.

Provide up to date technology training, equipment, broadband and support for our school systems for excellence in curriculum, research, distance learning and social awareness.

Recruit instructors for basic computer skills, and beginning programming skills, for training students, parents and seniors in rural and poor school districts, especially in the south county communities of Quilcene and Brinnon.

Provide every school with the broadband access necessary to remain competitive and the equipment and support to make this access meaningful.

Apply technology for the benefit of learning disabled students

Educate cottage industries and home based businesses about the benefits of using technology to reach global markets

Offer low-cost loans and other incentives for emerging growth and established companies to transform their operations to benefit from an information services based economy

Form a technology development council that could explain the benefits, strategy and development of the county's technology resources to companies that are considering moving here.

Partner with neighboring counties to pool resources and take advantage of possible funding opportunities for technology development.

Seek federal funding through legislative bills that aid technology development in rural counties.

Develop medical technology capabilities that link Jefferson County to other counties in North Olympic Peninsula and around the state to help bring broadband-dependent world-class medical services to rural areas.

Bring citizens closer to government and make government more responsive and efficient through applications available from Washington State's groundbreaking Digital Plan.

### **Environment**

Because of the unique environment and geography of Jefferson County, and to foster the development and growth of economic opportunities, local government should creatively act as an agent to promote original and creative opportunities which capitalize rather than destroy this environment.

Examples include marine travel, outdoor recreation, outdoor education, destination activities, environmental rehabilitation, environmental education and research, access improvement, facilities enhancement, and other low-impact tourist and local activities such as kayak trips, horse trips, summer camps, retreats, and education/research centers.

Salmon recovery and green space set aside programs are economically beneficial in that they maintain a county long-known as a destination on the basis of its rural, forest, and shoreline environment.

The prosperity of the citizens of Jefferson County has always been tied to our area's natural resources. The first citizens thrived on the abundance of fish, game, and native plants. When the European settlers arrived, they depended upon the same resources which had supported the native cultures. For the next century, fishing, forestry, and farming were the basis for the economy of Jefferson County. We support efforts to:

Restore the populations of salmon in the creeks, rivers, and marine waters of Jefferson County. This is best accomplished by a watershed-based approach to land use planning and regulation.

Restore the shoreline and marine resources of Jefferson County, both physical and esthetic. A new Jefferson County Shoreline Management Master Program must be written which recognizes current science and both state and federal laws.

Establish a new timber economy for Jefferson County which is sustainable, profitable, and protective of all the resources of Jefferson County. For forestry to be sustainable, its land base must not be reduced by conversion to other uses.

Reduce the environmental impacts of agricultural activities without threatening their fragile economic viability. Agricultural lands must be protected from conversion to uses incompatible with agriculture.

Promote those practices of aquaculture which do not degrade the shoreline and marine resources of Jefferson County. Aquaculture is a powerful constituency for clean water and careful upland development. Net pen fish feedlots are not acceptable.

Foster businesses which add economic value to the products of forestry, agriculture, and acceptable forms of aquaculture.

Protect the rural character of Jefferson County from sprawling, expensive, low-density development. The Jefferson County Democrats support the goals and policies of the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan as a suitable document for protecting rural character.

Protect rural lifestyles and economies from urbanization. Rural landscapes are living landscapes which take their vitality from the caring use of rural lands and resources.

Acquire critical habitats and resource lands by public and private entities for the protection of these lands and habitats, for compatible recreational opportunities, and for the scenic beauty which they hold.

Provide multi-generational public and private environmental education programs which give citizens the opportunity to personally and directly help to improve the environment of Jefferson County.

Come into compliance with the Endangered Species Act, the Growth Management Act, the Shorelines Management Act, and all other federal and state laws which protect the resources and the environment of Jefferson County.

### **Economic Development**

Jefferson County Democrats realize that our local economy can and will no longer be as reliant on natural resource extraction. We also realize that international trends of globalization have contributed to a loss of manufacturing jobs and profits throughout our region. At the same time, tax contributions from industry to government and social services have been reduced and real estate values have risen dramatically, increasing the cost of living.

We realize that personal income in our county has lagged the state and national averages over the last decade and that the “human capital” represented by our citizens is our chief asset. This is best enhanced through education, training and advocacy of local residents to transition to more appropriate employment.

We recognize that small, locally owned businesses have been the engine of recent growth and must be encouraged. Cost effective access to high technology infrastructure is a part of this. Tourism must be encouraged while emphasizing the needs and goals of the local communities which host visitors.

The creation and growth of small locally-owned businesses should be encouraged through tax incentives, low cost services, access to low interest capital, business associations, joint marketing and promotion, and instruction in marketing and sales skills.

We specifically support efforts to:

Identify and develop affordable financing mechanisms for homeowners and small business owners, preferably by locally owned and operated financial institutions.

Promote sustainable forestry practices and environmentally viable aquaculture, but specifically not net pens, to revitalize resource-based industries.

Revive the agricultural sector of our local economy by considering the marketing, profitability, energy consumption and land use factors which affect its’ viability.

Create programs and facilities which enhance the local community through the tourist industry.

Develop cost effective access to broadband telecommunications infrastructure for businesses and educational institutions.

Work with local business owners, consumers and regional distributors to identify ways to increase the offerings and lower the price of retail goods to keep more sales tax and profits in the county.

Cost effectively utilize economic development resources with a focus on retention and expansion of existing businesses while de-emphasizing expensive recruitment efforts of new business.

Emphasize public interest advocacy and public land protection on the part of the County government and Community Development staff when negotiating with privately held business interests and utility providers.

Raise and maintain living standards through meaningful employment for county citizens while minimizing costs to the community to encourage such activities.

Develop a reasonable equation for impact fees for development to reduce the amount of development cost that citizens have to subsidize.

Consider the equitability and long term effects of proposed economic development to employees and taxpayers as well as property owners, project developers and employers.

Integrate capital facilities planning with budget planning priorities, community affordability and subsequent land use determinations as mandated by law.

Implement the Economic Development goals of the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan which encourage sustainable economic development activities that complement the rural nature of Jefferson County.

Cooperate with the City of Port Townsend and other future Urban Growth Area representatives, as well as regional and state level entities, to integrate cost effective economic development activities which acknowledge the desires and requirements of local residents and are consistent with the Growth Management Act and other applicable legislation.

### **Parks and Recreation**

JEFFERSON COUNTY DEMOCRATS believe that parks, community facilities and recreational programs are integral and valuable parts of the lives and culture of citizens and their communities. We support:

The County's mission statements for Parks and Recreation Facilities and Programs and The Strategies, Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. We strongly encourage the county to adequately fund the parks and recreation department to meet the priority needs identified in this plan according to a reasonable and prudent schedule.

Stewardship for, and access to, county and other publicly owned recreational lands and facilities while protecting and maintaining the unique environment of each.

Continuing financial support from the city, county, state and federal governments for recreation programs, facilities development and maintenance, and property acquisition.

Development and implementation of long-range planning efforts that emphasize and utilize public input.

### **Affordable Housing**

Quality, affordable housing is a basic human right and should be available for all people. Local, state, and federal governments must implement programs that increase access to affordable housing, particularly home ownership. Specifically, we support efforts to:

Create special dispensations through zoning, subsidies, and regulations to guarantee an adequate supply of quality affordable housing.

Explore opportunities to develop very low-interest home loan options for qualified low and moderate-income individuals to purchase moderately priced housing. This may include the local government developing creative resource and partnership options.

Develop ongoing first-time homeowner training classes and human resources for initial homebuyers.

Develop more housing options for low and moderate-income individuals through options such as “multi-family ring” zones around current Urban Growth Area (UGA) and Rural Village Centers (RVC) commercial zones.

Allow people to purchase affordable, decent housing. We encourage and support programs for self- help housing with labor provided by volunteers including the owner.

Form a coalition of partners and stakeholders to meet regularly and identify problems or opportunities. Local government should facilitate this effort by providing resources, staff expertise, and political leadership.

Supplement federal and state housing assistance programs to help residents address the local high costs of housing.

Pursue development policies that will increase and encourage the retention of affordable, quality housing.

Identify, develop and deliver ways to provide affordable financing to potential homeowners who do not qualify for traditional down payment / mortgage programs.

Advocate for compliance with Growth Management Act requirements to minimize the added infrastructure costs attributable to the conversion of raw land.

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### **Criminal Justice**

Jefferson County Democrats recognize that prevention of crime is as important as reaction to crime. Authorities and communities must work together, assume responsibility for safety and prevention of crime, and make neighborhoods livable. Public safety is a crucial prerequisite for economic growth and development. We affirm the rights of workers to a safe and healthy work environment. Acknowledging the inherent risks their jobs entail, we believe these rights should be afforded workers in the criminal justice system. The health and safety of all prisoners should be assured. At the same time, we need to uphold the Constitutional Rights of all citizens. We support:

Efforts to keep our children safe by providing access to and dissemination of information regarding registered sex offenders.

Proven and promising prevention and early intervention programs to decrease the human and financial costs of crime now and in the future.

Reinforcing programs Jefferson County has in place that we know reduce detentions, truancy, violent behavior, substance abuse and other social problems in the schools.

Programs that offer intensive support to mothers at risk of abusing their newborns to reduce cases of child abuse and neglect

Increasing foster home placements for teens, as well as training for all foster parents.

Relieving the overcrowding in the Jefferson County Jail, including providing safe options for adolescents who must wait at the jail with adults until appropriate out of county detention placement is arranged.

The coordination of community services including health care, mental health care, alcohol and substance abuse treatment, comprehensive family services, conflict resolution and mediation in a cooperative effort to reduce criminal recidivism.

Less expensive alternatives to incarceration including deferred prosecution, electronic home surveillance, and community service to safely reintegrate nonviolent offenders back into the community.

Adequate staffing and training throughout the Law and Justice system.

Expanding the role of citizens in the budget process through the Law and Justice Council

A united community effort to lobby the State and Federal Government to ensure that adequate funds reach the local level to pay for mandated law and justice services.

Restoring the historic courthouse to make it safe in high winds or earthquakes and preserve it as the active center of our courts and county government.

### **Healthcare**

All citizens regardless of age, employment, status, gender or prior condition, including prisoners, have a basic right to physical and mental health care. Jefferson County Democrats recognize that the health and safety needs of residents are prerequisites for education, economic growth, and the well being of the community. State and federal leadership must be encouraged and supported to solve healthcare system problems, which disproportionately affect rural areas. Specifically, we support efforts to:

Develop a county wide program to assure access to needed health and social services for all residents regardless of insurance or income status, support financially strong and

sustainable local providers, promote high quality services, support prevention and early intervention programs, and encourage greater coordination of services.

Reduce teen pregnancy rates.

Create the organizational structure that includes the Board of Health, Jefferson General Hospital, Jefferson Mental Health Services, Jefferson Recovery Center, alternative healthcare providers, pharmacists, insurance providers, Economic Development Council, and consumers to comprehensively coordinate funding and services to meet the needs of residents and keep healthcare dollars in Jefferson County.

Recognize and eliminate environmental toxins that affect health and improve the quality and safety of the air we breathe and the water we drink.

Work with Federal, State, and local representatives to raise reimbursement rates from Medicare and Medicaid to accurately reflect our local, rural needs so that medical services and prescription drugs will be affordable.

Provide high-quality and well-staffed prevention and early-intervention outpatient programs that reduce societal and economic costs through reduction of domestic violence, child abuse, and substance abuse.

Provide access to pre-natal care and access to confidential family planning essential to a women's right to choose.

Provide quality early intervention outpatient and in-patient substance abuse treatment for at-risk adolescents.

Create an aggressive, comprehensive and consistent drug education and rehabilitation program that reduces drug use and manufacturing in the county.

Provide quick response to reports of domestic violence and child abuse with adequate safe homes for families and foster homes for children within the community.

Educate the public about existing programs for treatment of substance abuse, including free and voluntary programs active in our communities, by increasing public outreach in schools, businesses, and community organizations.

Increase options for community and home-based long-term care for our increasing population of seniors.

The Health Care 2000 initiative as a statewide solution to many of our local problems.

## **Government**

We believe that the role of government has been unduly attacked and denigrated by individuals and organizations devoted to the pursuit of profit at the expense of the average citizen. While often attractively packaged as efficient changes to lower taxes for all or to develop a private vision of economic development, the true goals are much more often to impair government's ability to require responsible actions to those who will pay costs to accommodate such changes without benefiting from them. We observe the results of such self-interested efforts to destroy government to be an abandonment of those citizens most in need of public assistance, a degradation of the natural environment and quality of life, the turnover of public lands to private enterprise, and the limiting of citizens' ability to challenge the government's pursuit of such inequities.

We believe that county government should support the will of its constituents and not the individual ideological imperatives of elected officials or their business backers. Recent experiences have shown that the public interest in our county is often represented only through costly, private legal challenges of official decisions. This represents a dangerous, expensive and unacceptable pattern of special interest promotion or dereliction of duty on the backs of average citizens.

We believe that government officials should work within the framework and spirit of established laws, treat citizens with dignity and respect, seek diverse opinions when making important decisions, and build consensus for strategic goals. We expect government employees to be of the highest quality and to adhere to the strictest ethical standards. We specifically support efforts to:

Provide leadership requiring difficult decisions to be made on taxing and spending issues in place of development of separate taxing districts and levy funded programs which obscure true budget perspectives and require undue costs and efforts to consistently deliver such programs and services.

Determine budget priorities and subsequent income requirements necessary to provide comprehensive services in a cost effective manner based on the need to maintain the standards and quality of life for all citizens.

Pursue implementation of the County's Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan documents.

Adequately prioritize and fund planning efforts to develop cost effective approaches to growth and quality of life issues.

Advocate for the public interest ahead of corporate and business interests.

Educate and hold accountable elected officials to the legal constraints with which they are bound by state and federal laws.

Demonstrate the costs in both dollars and staff time to taxpayers associated with government initiated legal challenges to land use and environmental laws.

Encourage the administration and staff of local government to perform their duties to high standards without fear of reprisal based on political or ideological grounds.

### **Transportation**

Democrats recognize the need for a comprehensive program of transportation which makes it possible for the citizens of Jefferson County to sustain economic growth, provide essential services to the citizens of the county and support equal access and accommodation for individuals with special needs. We recognize the infrastructure of the ferry system, the bridges and the roadways as vital to the economy and community life of our citizens and encourage the development of alternative methods, wherever possible, including motorized transportation, light rail, bicycle pathways and lanes and additional waterway use. We specifically support efforts to:

Reduce transportation requirements through development and implementation of focused planning and economic development goals.

Prioritize the needs of those who rely on mass transit in their daily lives to achieve economic and social independence.

Promote energy efficient modes of transportation which enhance tourism and protect the environment while preserving our rural character and community identity.

Enhance our attractiveness as a place to visit and live by promoting alternative modes of transportation such as walking trails and bike paths.

Critically evaluate the economic impacts associated with reducing quality of life through increased air and water traffic. This applies particularly to such modes as sea plane and cruise ship visitations.