

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM

SECTION I. Economic development, justice and jobs in Hillsborough County.

A. Stimulate Quality Job Development.

The Hillsborough County Democratic Party is committed to preserving and expanding Hillsborough's middle class by creating well-paying jobs and by strengthening demand for Hillsborough products. The Party recognizes that a depressed economy is especially painful for low wage workers and the unemployed; therefore, we support job training and union apprenticeship programs that can better prepare these workers for a changing economy. The Democratic Party supports a living wage for all workers and unemployment benefits for the unemployed, fair compensation, paid sick and family leave. The Democratic Party supports fair collective bargaining rights, green job creation, investment in our crumbling infrastructure, and policies that aim to address economic inequality by ensuring that working people receive their fair share of Florida's prosperity. The Democratic Party opposes harmful economic practices that exploit low-income Floridians, including predatory payday lending practices. We support investments in job creation and training to accelerate conversion to renewable energy, as well as the construction of more sustainable infrastructure. We support investment in public service, including teachers and first-responders, as well as in small businesses that make communities thrive.

B. Hillsborough County is best served by having a strong middle class and workers' unions play a large part in accomplishing this. We oppose so-called "right-to-work" laws as they are an attempt to undermine collective bargaining. Unions are obliged to represent all members of a bargaining unit, and such laws encourage free riders to duck their responsibility to support the bargaining unit.

C. Encourage Businesses and Enforce Accountability. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party believes in offering incentives and streamlining permitting processes to foster job creation; however, we oppose tax incentives that put an extra burden on small businesses and individuals. Free enterprise should be fair enterprise. We support regulations that create safe work environments for employees and adequate protections for consumers. Economic growth should enhance the quality of life in the community at large. Veterans, who have given much to defend our country, deserve special attention in local economic development and hiring decisions.

D. Improve the Tax System in a progressive direction to better meet public needs. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party calls for tax reforms that strengthen our local economy,

bearing in mind that tax cuts must be equitably distributed and tax incentives and subsidies appropriately targeted. Upon getting control of the legislature in 1996 and governor's office in 1998, the Republicans began to cut taxes in a regressive direction, and that has resulted in serious service cuts during all these years of continued population growth. The state never has had an income tax, and the Republicans abolished the taxes on intangible wealth, but kept sales taxes and user's fees, the result being that the

rich in Florida have become increasingly wealthy while the poor have more than paid their own way. As Democrats, we believe large corporations and the wealthiest Floridians should pay their fair share. We believe in closing tax loopholes and taxing financial transactions and services so that hardworking Floridians and small businesses are not paying more than their share.

SECTION II. Rebuilding Hillsborough's Public Educational System

A. Fully Fund Public Schools.

The Hillsborough County Democratic Party supports the very clear provisions of Article IX, Section 1, Florida Constitution, as amended, providing by law for all children within its borders a uniform, efficient, safe and secure system of free public schools that allow students to obtain a high-quality education at funding levels adequate to meet those high standards. The Hillsborough Democratic Party supports sufficient funding to meet the constitutional requirements relating to classroom size at different grade levels. Section I of this document says we do not support using public money to improve private property. Regarding education, this bears repeating as it is now being done in the case of charter schools. The Republican argument on education seems to be that public schools are failing, and they will make sure that they do.

B. Improve Testing and Evaluation.

The Hillsborough County Democratic Party supports assessment standards developed by educators who embrace the total educational experience and consider the physical, emotional and developmental stages of assessable children. Teacher pay should not be tied to student performance. In the implementation of assessments associated with the new Common Core Standards, Florida authorities should not rush to adopt an assessment process that has not been deemed valid, and that does not inform instruction.

C. Promote Quality Teaching. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party recognizes that teachers, as educated and specially trained professionals, are the most important component serving students in the public-school system. We support pay and benefits that are

commensurate with teachers' responsibilities and experience. We support the rights of teachers to organize to achieve adequate pay and benefits, and to secure their rights to due process (tenure).

D. Protect Children in Schools. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party puts a high priority on keeping our schools and communities safe. We recognize that bullying has a substantial negative impact on the academic achievement of children at all ages and must be prevented. We oppose zero tolerance policies which feed the schools-to-prison pipeline.

E. Keep Public Money in Public Schools. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party opposes school vouchers and for-profit charter schools which divert resources from public schools and are not accountable to the taxpayers. The

Democratic Party calls for a moratorium on new, privately-managed, for-profit charter schools; will oppose any legislation that seeks to weaken oversight and accountability of charter schools and further privatize our public education system; and will seek/support legislation which strengthens the oversight of charter schools and returns control to local school districts, parents, and teachers. The Democratic Party opposes subsidizing for-profit charter schools with public money and calls for full funding and support of high-quality, free public education for all children.

F. Early Childhood Education. Head Start, Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten and other early childhood programs should be supported, expanded and fully funded.

SECTION III. Health and Human Services in Hillsborough County

A. Promote General Welfare. The Democratic Party supports quality and guaranteed health care as a right for all Floridians and supports policies that work towards a more progressive health care system.

The Hillsborough County Democratic Party believes it is the constitutional duty of government to promote the general welfare of the population, to lay and maintain this groundwork so that communities of families can be healthy, and businesses can prosper.

The government is not running a business that seeks profit. Local government should be efficient and accountable, as a business should be, but the "bottom line" of government is more holistic than that of a business firm.

B. Health Care for All. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party supports affordable healthcare, by supporting a single-payer, not-for profit, universal health care plan for all people (Medicare for all). Hillsborough County

has maintained one of the best programs of coverage for the poor for twenty years and we want to improve that program and work to expand health care for all people. Access to affordable, high quality healthcare is a right for all Americans. Focusing on preventive healthcare for both physical and mental illness saves lives and money.

The Democratic Party believes socioeconomic factors should not determine access to quality health care, and that health care is a human right that should be guaranteed to every American.

We are committed to defending and advancing women's reproductive rights, including but not limited to, a woman's right to choose, preventative health care and access to contraceptives.

C. Make Health Care Choices

Available. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party does not put ideology above women's health. We believe women can make good decisions about their own healthcare, including and especially regarding reproductive health. Government should not interfere in these choices.

D. Reasonable marijuana regulation.

Now that Florida's Constitution permits the use of marijuana for medical purposes, the Hillsborough Democratic Party believes that reasonable rules should be adopted covering its distribution and use. The Democratic Party supports patient centered treatment for drug addiction recovery and/or other best practices as applied in the best of other states.

E Public Health and Human Services.

In addition to issues of health, per se, the Hillsborough Democratic Party is concerned about privatization and reduction of other human services, a trend we have observed over the past two decades.

F. STOP the Race to the Bottom in Health and Human Services.

The Democratic Party of Hillsborough County is especially concerned about Florida's racing to the bottom among the fifty states in funding of public services, especially those relating to health and human services. This all started with the Republican movement in the late 1990s of reducing taxes and privatizing services that led to the Republicans taking over the legislature in 1996 and the governorship in 1998.

Prior to that takeover, Florida's systems of health and human services were planned and evaluated by district (and statewide) Health and Human Services Boards made up of concerned citizens appointed largely by the county commissions. Details on how that system worked, at the county, multi-county district, and statewide levels, are described on the web site of the Florida Health and Human Services Board, Inc. <<http://fhhsb.org/Background.html>>.

In 1998, Florida joined a race to the bottom in spending on health and human services. With no income tax, and no taxes on services, Florida had a head start among states in the downhill race. With rapid population growth coinciding with Florida's "no tax" political environment, our state has been an easy winner in that race to the bottom in per capita health and

human services funding among states.

During this period Florida has been moving away from citizen- and community-based planning and home rule toward more centralized control by the governor and the legislature. Prior to the year 2000 it was fair to say that our governor, constitutionally and in practice, had very little power. For a description of that period of decentralized rule, see [“Why Florida’s Governor gets no respect,”](#) (Jreisat and Wolfe, 1995). Once the Republicans took over Tallahassee in 1996-1998, the governor and legislators increased their own control over every aspect of our lives, although they proclaimed themselves to be against big government and for family and local community. Florida changed radically as the legislature and the governor took more control. Those interested may read details in two articles: [“Anthropological Perspectives on Welfare Reform in Florida,”](#) (Wolfe, 2000), and [“Power to the Governor”](#) (Jreisat and Wolfe, 2002).

G. Encourage local citizen input and planning. The Democratic Party, both Hillsborough County and statewide, favor more citizen involvement in planning and management and less central rule from the governor’s office or by laws promulgated by the legislature. In Florida, although Home Rule has been in the constitution since 1968, and specified in the Home Rule Powers Act of 1973, recent years have seen considerable weakening of local control and initiative. Legislative and regulatory control in the form of unfunded mandates is a huge problem for counties and municipalities on the one hand, and on the other,

legislative prevention of desired community initiatives, such as local gun regulation. In the 21st Century there seems to be more control over local communities and counties, and more contracting out of services with control held by the state.

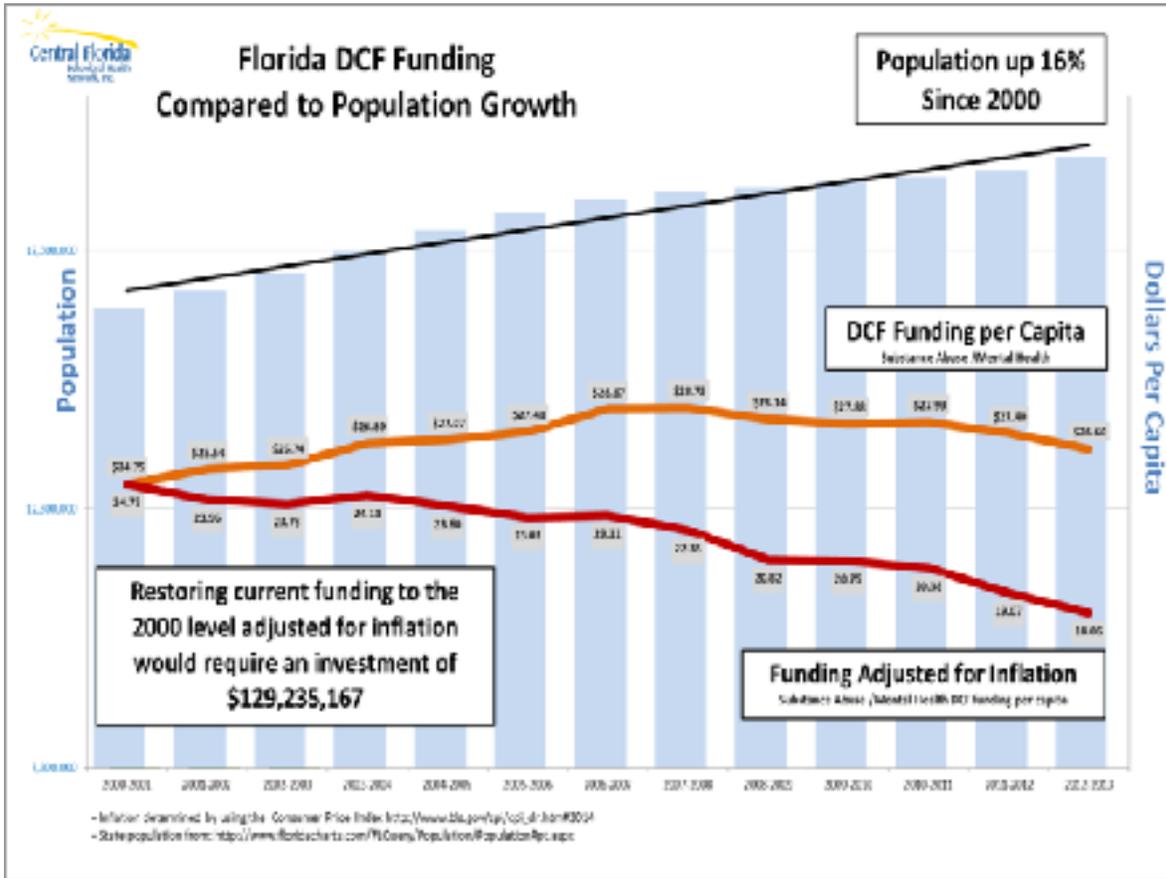
Child welfare services were among the first to experience the transition to privatized services, and it was accomplished with great stealth by labeling it “Community Based Care.” Put simply, that was really privatization of the Children and Family Services Department, but with contracts centralized in the Governor’s Office. For a complete history of that see the web site of the Florida Health and Human Services Board (<http://www.FHHSB.org>).

During this same period of Republican dominance of Florida, the higher education system was removed from the aegis of the nearly autonomous Board of Regents, to a much more centralized system directly controllable by joint action of the legislature and governor.

The Hillsborough Democratic Party recommends that Florida increase per capita spending on such services, both prevention and treatment. Prior to the Republicans taking over the governorship and the legislature in 1996-98, each Health and Rehabilitative District in Florida had a local District Health and Human Services Board that was responsible for needs assessment and services planning for each district. Governor Bush and the legislature abolished that local input in 2001 and privatized most health and human

services! Since then, there has been a downward trend in funding per capita.

See graph below:



Section IV. Justice for All

A. Civil Rights for All. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party believes that all people should be treated equally and fairly by all levels of government and society, without bias based on race, ethnicity, color, religion, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, or family status. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party also appreciates the responsibility of government to protect abandoned,

abused children and disabled persons of all ages. Due to the persistent institutional racism that exists in America, certain minorities are targeted and punished disproportionately. Therefore, we support movements like Black Lives Matter that are aimed at calling attention to and purposefully dismantling this racism.

B. Gun Safety. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party joins the

Florida Democratic Party in seeking to end gun violence by promoting gun safety, responsible gun ownership, and common-sense gun control in the state of Florida. We also support Home Rule in the sense that local counties and cities are most likely to make good decisions when they are self-governing

C. Civilian Police Review Boards. We support civilian police review boards that will assure increased police accountability and credibility within the communities they serve. We support appointment of a civilian police review board empowered with the authority to set police policy as well as investigative and subpoena power, to assure the accountability and credibility of police forces within the communities they serve. The board should be staffed by independent citizens unrelated to law enforcement or other government officials. The board should be funded adequately to perform their duties. To achieve and maintain credibility, public hearings should be on their agenda.

D. Respect for Veterans. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party believes in identifying and advocating for Florida veterans and military families and providing comprehensive social services, now and in the future, to our veterans who have fought for and defended this country for which they should be compensated and rewarded appropriately. As democrats we will fight to ensure that veterans who have given of their physical and mental well-being for our nation to receive the care they need.

E. Expanding Access to the Vote. Hillsborough County Democratic Party believes that we must provide equal access and opportunities to all citizens to participate fully in the political process. We will fight all efforts to suppress those rights. The right to vote is the basis of democratic society.

F. Expanding Voter Participation. Hillsborough County Democrats support efforts to increase voter participation by all sectors of the population. Participation can be enhanced by many simple ways: voting systems that guarantee every ballot is counted and secure with an auditable paper trail; having polls open on weekends or a state holiday makes it easier for working people; open primaries would encourage those whose registration is something other than Republican or Democrat; using ranked choice voting would assure that each vote has some effect and that the winner has a majority. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party does not favor our party's use of super delegates at the national level because it gives the impression that the local ballots are less valuable. We also concur with the Florida Democratic Party that we should do everything possible to encourage participation by persons with disabilities.

G. Restore the civil rights of felons upon completion of court ordered sentences. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party recognizes that Civil

rights must be restored to those who have paid their debt to society. The Party notes especially that the rights these people have lost often include rights having to do with health, education, employment and housing, more than just voting rights.

H. Affordable Housing. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party believes that governments at various levels should find effective ways not only to combat homelessness but also to help all residents to find affordable housing.

I. Open Government.

All local governments in Florida must abide by the constitutional

requirement that government must operate in the sunshine as required in Article I, Section 24, of the Constitution.

J. Fairness in communications. While the U.S Supreme Court finds corporate advertising equivalent to human speech, thus severely restricting its regulation, and the Federal Communications Commission regulates internet service providers (corporations and governments) in mass communications, the Democratic Party of Hillsborough County believes there should be some way to support fairness in communications regarding local elections.

Section V. Hillsborough Needs Strong Infrastructure

A. Public Facilities Serve All People. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party believes that accessible public facilities and the services associated with them are crucial to every community. Charging user fees as a business firm would is not necessarily in the best interest of the community because it reduces the contribution of such facilities to the community.

saving measures should be applied in this restoration of physical infrastructure.

B. Rehabilitation of Physical Infrastructure. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party supports the full maintenance and rebuilding of public roads, bridges, and buildings that have deteriorated during years of neglect. Energy-efficient and cost-

C. Supporting Home Rule & Opposing Big Money in Politics. Along with our colleagues in the Florida Democratic Party, Hillsborough County Democrats support home rule and oppose private control of public projects.

D. Keep Florida's Public Land, Beaches and Parks Publicly Owned. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party supports environmentally safe systems of agriculture and energy. We oppose fracking and offshore drilling.

E. Planning for Public Transportation and all other Infrastructure requires Citizen Participation and Coordination.

As was said in Section IIG, the Hillsborough County Democratic Party supports citizen-driven coordinated planning for meeting many needs of our communities. Earlier sections of this platform dealt particularly with economic development, jobs, education, health and human services, and justice. Public transportation is necessary for people to apply for jobs and then get to work, to public parks and recreational facilities, to participate in community life. The Hillsborough County Democratic Party supports all modes of public transportation, accessible to all.

F. Citizen Participation in Planning is also important to safe and livable communities.

Prior to 2,000, Florida had district and statewide health and human services boards made up of appointed citizens who planned and advised officials in health and human services as well as many other public services. Republicans abolished those in particular and weakened all the rest. Examples of the latter are the University Regents and the Judicial Nominating Committees, both of which were previously somewhat autonomous but are now much more

dependent on the governor. (For details, see Jreisat and Wolfe 2002) <<http://lutzliberals.us/LL&PL/Power2Governor.pdf>>

The Democratic Party, both Hillsborough County and statewide, favors more citizen involvement in planning and management and less central regulation from the governor's office or from the legislature.

In Florida, since the late twentieth century, there seems to be more and more control over local communities and counties, often by the privatization of services but with the state government writing the contracts and thus maintaining complete control.

As discussed in Section III, child welfare was the first area of public services to experience privatization. It was accomplished with stealth by labeling it "Community Based Care." During this same period of Republican dominance of Florida, the higher education system was removed from the aegis of the nearly autonomous Board of Regents, to a much more centralized system directly controllable by joint action of the legislature and the governor.

Editor's note: This 2018 Platform was drafted during the year 2017 by the joint efforts of two committees of the Hillsborough County Democratic Executive Committee, the Platform Committee and the Legislative Liaison Committee. Contributors included:

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