



## **Core Political Platform**

Adopted November 2017

### **1. Democracy**

We believe in supporting structures that create a strong democratic ecosystem, where debate occurs out in the open; where constituent voices are heard; where public meetings are a robust, public forum and are not a “rubber stamp.”

Further, we believe:

- A strong democracy reacts to the needs of a diverse constituency.
- Transparency and accessibility to citizens are vital components of any political entity.
- Robust primary elections are an important part of a healthy democratic process.
- Public debates with all candidates, including incumbents, should take place for all elections, including primary elections.
- Elections should be open and publicly funded to enable all Americans to participate in the political process at whatever level interests them.

Together, we stand strongly against:

- Egregious amounts of money in politics, particularly as money functions in NJ’s infamous “pay to play” politics.
- Corruption in politics, in all its forms. This includes: any and all types of effective voter suppression, threats or fears of intimidation or retaliation for having an opinion that differs from those in power; nepotism, cronyism, and political monopoly.
- Unelected political bosses “calling the shots” in our local and state governments.

Therefore, we support actions that:

- Commit to the monitoring of and holding all elected officials accountable, including those in our towns, and counties, and our local state-level offices. We also commit to hold accountable all those who are unelected, but wield power in our region.

Actively seek to run candidates and involve citizens in the political process at every level of government, to build habits of action and a lasting progressive infrastructure across South Jersey.

- Seek to eliminate the “Party Line” in South Jersey’s ballots, leading to a more fair and transparent political process.
- Advocate for early voting to be implemented in New Jersey to encourage participation and increase overall turnout.
- Support automatic voter registration to ensure that all citizens are able to immediately participate in the electoral process.
- Work to overturn Citizens United and remove untraceable and unlimited money, including corporate money, from politics, and move toward a different primary.

## 2) Environment

SJWPC will work to create and sustain healthy local, regional and global habitats and ecosystems and address the systemic causes of climate change. Because environmental issues disproportionately threaten low-income and communities of color, we work toward environmental justice across the entire region.

We believe:

- NJ has the potential to lead the nation in the production of renewable energy that uses Renewable Portfolio Standards to reach 100 percent clean, renewable energy from wind and solar by 2035.
- The protection of open space and our waterways are urgent priorities, with a special focus on the Pinelands and the NJ shore.
- Smart growth, with an eye toward environmental sustainability, public open space, and public transportation, is preferable to unchecked suburban sprawl.
- We must modernize public transit and make our cities and towns pedestrian and bike-friendly so that we get more trucks and cars off our congested roads.
- We must update our infrastructure to ensure access to clean drinking water and alleviate other health risks.
- In a robust, statewide energy efficiency program, which includes direct emissions, reductions of greenhouse gases and co-pollutants, energy affordability, net metering, community choice aggregation, meaningful community input and analysis and enforcement.

We stand strongly against:

- The privatization of our water
- Building additional pipelines and fossil fuel infrastructure in NJ
- Trump’s irresponsible cuts to the EPA
- Unsustainable development in the South Jersey suburbs and along the Jersey Shore, and
- Fracking and fracking waste anywhere in NJ.

Therefore, we will work toward:

- Renewable energy that moves us away from dependence on fracking in Pennsylvania and other states; and commit to never fracking in NJ.

- Meeting federal standards for ground level ozone in all areas, urban and suburban.
- Protecting vital habitat in South Jersey, including, but not limited to the Jersey Shore, the Delaware River Basin and the Pinelands.
- Decreasing our dependence on harmful pesticides and other elective toxins.
- Work toward eliminating lead in our water and soil; and educating the public about other toxins in their water, air and soil so that they can be eliminated from the environment through toxic chemical reform legislation.
- Fighting the privatization of our water and for a reliable and consistent source of funding for our drinking water infrastructure.
- Sustainable community development that includes green transportation, thoughtful development, not “suburban sprawl,” with open land, parks and recreation space, with a focus on wildlife habitats and native species.
- Protecting our farmland and rich agricultural resources.
- Encouraging the use of electric vehicles and expanding access to vehicle charging stations in New Jersey.
- Ensuring that our state’s buildings and fleets are designed with sustainability in mind.

### 3) Education

SJW4PC advocates for all youth to have access to equitable, high-quality public education that is culturally responsive and places the needs of the whole child at the center of decision-making processes. We support public education because it is a pillar of our democratic society.

Further, we believe:

- Standardized testing must be used sparingly. Abusive, excessive or punitive standardized testing takes the joy out of learning, replicates inequality, and is the cornerstone of the effort to privatize education.
- Recess and free play are pillars of a joyful and educative childhood; each child deserves the right to play and exercise each day.
- Wrap-around services should be available to all who need them.
- The needs of special education students must be met so that each student has a chance to realize his or her full potential and always prioritizing the needs of the child over the measurements of the standardized test.
- Curriculum should be culturally responsive and inclusive of LGBTQ students and those with disabilities. Schools should offer a full and rich curriculum for all children, including the arts, physical education, history, civics, foreign languages, literature, mathematics, the sciences, vocational training and evidence-based sex education, inclusive of LGBT students.
- Districts should be subject to democratic control by members of their community.
- Schools must have reasonable class sizes, so that teachers have the time to help the children in their care.
- Every classroom should be led by a teacher who is well educated, well prepared for the challenges of teaching and certified.
- Schools that are struggling should be supported, not closed.
- Students’ confidential information must remain confidential and not be handed over to for-profit entrepreneurs and marketers.
- Debt-free college should be an option for all students, but college education should not be the only pathway to the middle class. We must work toward a society where humans are paid a living wage, regardless of their college education status.

We stand strongly against:

- The privatization of public education and school vouchers
- The removal of democratic processes in school districts in NJ
- Increased influence of standardized testing, and the narrowing of curriculum that inevitably follows, and
- Loss of joy in learning as a result of increased pressures in school, particularly for our youngest children.

Therefore, we will work toward:

- Supporting members who choose to refuse the PARCC test and all standardized tests, and help educate others on their options to do so.
- Supporting the full funding of School Funding Reform Act so that all schools in NJ receive the amount of state funding that they need.
- Creating schools that are safe spaces for immigrants, LGBTQ youth; for all children to grow and thrive in a non-judgmental, non-violent space.
- Assisting in helping communities pass school- or district-wide resolutions to protect student rights.
- The implementation of culturally responsive curriculum and materials at all grade levels.
- Addressing the racial and economic inequities that are so dramatic within our state.

#### 4) Racial Justice and Civil Rights

SJWPC will work to actively dismantle all structures of racism and bias within our membership, communities, state and nation. We will diligently uphold access to our democratic systems and institutions and will fight for increased access and accountability for all people who live within our borders. We will work to build communities of sanctuary for those historically and currently marginalized, underrepresented and voiceless. We will fervently defend the civil rights and dignity of our members, and all people in our communities, state and nation.

We believe:

- That all peoples deserve access to clean water, air and shelter, safe food, effective medicines, high-quality education, a living wage and personal safety and security to pursue life, liberty and security.
- That we must listen to one another, educate ourselves and one another and learn from those affected by oppression and injustice, validating and valuing their experiences and centering the work around the views of those most affected.
- Racial justice is integrated into every progressive issue since people of color are most affected by climate change and environmental degradation, violence, downward wage pressure, dysfunction in our healthcare systems and a lack of funding for education and job training.

We stand strongly against:

- Structural and institutional racism and all forms of explicit and implicit bias
- Militarization of our police and police oversight of police practices
- All policies and practices that unfairly impact people of color, those with disabilities, people who are LGBTQ and others who are marginalized, and
- Corporate control of our democracy that disenfranchises those without power.

We must:

- Dismantle unjust systems of mass incarceration by ending the privatization of our schools, prisons and healthcare institutions, by eradicating fee structures and administrative red tape that disproportionately impact those who are low-income, by providing effective community supports and by correcting the historic criminalization of black people for non-violent crime.
- End the criminalization of black people and black youth and end youth incarceration.
- End the war on drugs by approaching drug addiction as a mental health crisis and not a criminal one.
- Prohibit the inclusion of the felony check box on employment and housing applications
- Protect our residents from deportation.
- Participate in discussions about reparations and explore what our role can be around these efforts.
- Insist on equitable housing opportunities in all communities.
- Work to raise awareness of racism and not stay silent in the face of injustice.
- Defend the rights and preserve the dignity of our LGBTQ friends and neighbors, ending discrimination in schools, housing, healthcare and all public and private institutions.
- Continue to educate ourselves about our country's history of racism and white supremacy and bring this awareness to all such situations.
- Protect all citizens, including undocumented and recently-arrived New Jerseyans.
- Support networks, organizations and actions led by people of color.

Therefore, we will work toward:

- Divesting in prisons, investing in local community supports and appropriate treatment
- The integration of racial impact studies into the legislative process.
- Transparency and well-governed local police departments with community oversight and third party disciplinary review.
- An end to racial profiling.
- Supporting policies which preserve the rights of transgender individuals, including supporting legislation to remove the surgery requirement to change a gender marker.
- Working to make our own municipalities welcoming, safe places for immigrants.
- Opening access to transportation, home ownership and other programs that level the playing field and build wealth for people of color.
- Improving mental health supports and services so that we treat those with mental illness and addiction, rather than criminalize them.
- Ending violence in our communities.

## 5) Economic Justice

We believe that all Americans should have access to a fair and living wage. Workers should be valued, protected, have income security and work under fair conditions. We believe that all New Jerseyans should have access to fair and affordable housing, ensuring that their race or income does not determine the safety of housing, education or economic opportunity afforded to our residents.

Further, we believe:

- Appropriate job training and apprenticeship opportunities should be available to prepare students for the workforce.
- In protecting workers through guaranteed sick leave and other workplace reforms.
- The creation of living wage jobs is vital to our economy.
- We must develop our towns and municipalities in a way that both listens to and benefits communities, including providing access to transportation.
- All people have a right to access clean, safe housing.
- Affordable housing is critical to keeping NJ diverse and accessible.
- Renters deserve protection from predatory landlords. We

stand strongly against:

- “Right to work” laws
- The dismantling of collective bargaining
- Exploitative work conditions
- Exclusionary zoning practices, and
- Unsustainable, environmentally unsound development.

Therefore, we:

- Support a state and national \$15 minimum wage.
- Pursue living wage legislation at the municipality level that ensures public dollars go toward livable wages.
- Introduce legislation at the municipal level to guarantee sick leave so that parents need not choose between taking care of a sick child and keeping a job or paying rent.
- Encourage municipalities to support the creation of green jobs through zoning, codes and taxes.
- Organize to negotiate Community Benefits Agreements that promote local and diverse hiring, and ensure development supports communities.
- Support affordable and accessible public transportation and pedestrian/biking infrastructure that ensures NJ residents can safely and affordably get to and from their jobs.
- Pursue a fair work week.
- Support state legislation for paid parental leave, and equal work for equal pay.
- Combat wage theft.
- Providing ample job training and apprenticeship opportunities to prepare our youth for the jobs that are available in our state.
- Support increased affordable housing and home ownership in our own communities
- Pursue the creation of community land trusts.
- Support municipal and county efforts to reduce unfair evictions.
- Support non-profit, county or municipal efforts to provide housing for the homeless in our communities.
- Address the foreclosure crisis in New Jersey through reforms.

## 6) Healthcare

We believe healthcare is a right, not a privilege enjoyed by only the wealthy or fully employed. All people in our country should have access to a public option, and join all the other industrialized nations around the world in providing healthcare to citizens. Empathy and care should be the fundamental principles of our healthcare system, not profit and competition.

Further, we believe:

- There should be a specific focus on the research and implementation of healthcare in underserved communities so that these forces can be aptly mitigated. We must study the contributing factors to illness and address upstream threats to health.
- Strengthening the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is essential. We must do our best to eradicate food insecurity in NJ.
- A fundamental right of personhood is the ability to make one's own healthcare decisions with their doctor. This includes, especially, women, whose right to health care is often rife with obstacles and judgement.
- Access to birth control and emergency contraception should be free with a prescription, or available over the counter, and women should be able to make their own decisions regarding ALL health-related issues.
- Marijuana use for medicinal purposes should be legal.
- Common sense gun control measures should be enacted to reduce the number of deaths by guns in the United States.
- All New Jerseyans should have access to high quality preventative, mental health and effective treatments, regardless of pre-existing conditions, ability to pay or literacy level.
- Transparency in medicine is critical to controlling costs and empowering healthcare consumers to make strong decisions, balancing economic factors and health outcomes.
- The safety of our food supply and access to healthy food in all NJ communities is the foundation of wellness and prevention of chronic illness.

We stand strongly against:

- The repeal of the Affordable Care Act
- Turning Medicare into a voucher program, and
- The defunding of Planned Parenthood.

Therefore we:

- Support healthcare access for all citizens, including single-payer healthcare.
- Support the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) as an evidence-based effective measure to improve the health of young people.
- Believe in the power of preventative care and in the breaking down of barriers to effective care.
- The opioid crisis, as well as ALL drug and alcohol addictions, should be treated as medical conditions, not criminalized.
- Believe that access to healthcare is a cornerstone of population health. That includes the access of patients to their health care professionals, as well as access to careers in health care for all qualified members of society. Health care professionals should, like all professions, be representative of all races, ethnicities and genders.