



Down Home North Carolina 2020 Western NC Issue Platform

Background: *Down Home NC is a powerful new force for democracy and economic fairness. We represent the diverse, multi-racial working-class and poor families of small towns and rural communities. We are active in elections, and endorse candidates who support our Issues Platform, who are willing to fight for the just needs of working people, have a plan to win, and are willing to include our members in the process of governing.*

Co-Governance

Democracy With, For & By the People

Our government is supposed to be of, by, and for the people. Too often our voices have been denied, suppressed, and silenced. Governing power belongs in the hands of the people at every level of government. We support fair voter access, campaign finance reform, and non-partisan districting systems to fulfill the true ideals of democracy. Specifically, we support:

- The expansion of mail-in ballots to be a universal option for the entire voting period
- Establishing voting districts that fairly represent our people by ending racial and partisan gerrymandering
- The rejection of any effort that would restrict voting access by increasing voting accessibility, polling locations, and early voting opportunities to ensure maximum participation in elections
- Establishing a recognized, legal Holiday for Election Day on which all workers must be guaranteed the time to exercise their right as voters
- The repeal of *Citizens United*
- Requiring transparency in campaign donations and spending while setting limitations on spending in elections
- Representatives that are accessible, authentic and transparent with their constituents and the general public; that regularly communicate with their constituents via in-district visits, town halls, and public events
- The exploration and implementation of publicly financed elections and limited time for campaigning
- The expansion of mail-in ballots to be a universal option for the entire voting period
- The support of increased access to voting through electronic and digital technology
- Media that is fair, transparent, and without bias in its coverage
- Full voting rights for people in prison and those with felony convictions



Community

We believe in a government that serves working people by assuring everyone has access to nutritious food, good homes, quality education, and clean air, land, and water. We believe these are human rights and are necessary for a good life.

Healthcare

All people deserve quality healthcare as a fundamental right guaranteed by our government. We want a healthcare system that prioritizes the health of our people and communities over the profits of pharmaceutical and insurance corporations. We need a healthcare system that guarantees care for all, at the time it is needed, regardless of where we live or who we are. Specifically, we support:

- **The unconditional expansion of North Carolina's Medicaid program**
- The rejection of work requirements, drug testing and other prescriptive prerequisites for Medicaid or health coverage
- Providing reproductive healthcare services, as well as healthcare for LGBTQIA+ people, without restriction or limitation
- Providing health services for mental health as a preventive measure and not as a last resort, specifically before the legal system is involved in the aftermath of mental health-related crimes or crises
- Providing substance dependency treatment, specifically expanding syringe exchange programs and services, and ensuring broader access to naloxone for people who use drugs and their family and friends
- Investment in improvements to rural hospitals, health care services, and emergency care
- Expand hospitals that are mission-and-service driven and not focused on earning revenue for investors
- The investigation of the unethical elements of the pharmaceutical industry in contributing to opioid addiction
- The support of and investment in equal access to reproductive health care and family planning services through organizations such as Planned Parenthood, etc.

Equitable Employment Opportunity/Living Wage

We believe that every person has something to offer our society, and we want to ensure that everyone has access to jobs with good pay and benefits. Everyone should be able to care for and support their families and have a secure retirement. We believe working people have a right to organize in unions as well as equal respect and benefits at home and work. Specifically, we support:

- The establishment of a living minimum wage at \$15/hour, or what is driven by the local economy, whichever is greater, for all employed individuals
- Establishing the right of all workers to bargain collectively and reject any attempt to curtail the democratic rights of workers
- Pay equity for all workers, regardless of gender, race, national origin, citizenship, sexuality and gender identity, physical ability or any other demographic
- Investment by our government in repairs and improvements to our public infrastructure as an initiative to create good jobs.
- Requiring employers to provide paid family and medical leave, vacation, and sick days for every worker
- Providing public assistance for those in need, such as the unemployed or unable to work, at living wage standards



- Immediate and permanent job-protected 14 days paid sick leave and three months of family medical leave for all workers, including part-time, seasonal workers, and independent contractors, regardless of immigration status
- Non-discrimination employment practices to ensure the rights of every employee, regardless of gender, race, national origin, citizenship, sexuality and gender identity, physical ability, or any other demographic

Fair taxes:

- Policies that prevent corporations from offshoring profits and jobs in order to avoid fiscal responsibility
- An estate tax and corporate tax to make sure working people are fairly compensated for the profits they generate through work
- The proper allocation of taxes to state programs and public infrastructure
- An increase in the corporate tax rate
- Graduated, progressive personal income tax, as well as a wealth tax and Capital gains tax reform, to ensure that low-income people do not bear an unfair burden, and to provide for adequate revenue by taxing the wealthiest the most, without a cap on income eligible for taxation

Environment

We believe the climate science issued from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report issued in 2018. The report states that the climate crisis is human-caused and we have less than 12 years to face the crisis head-on, to prevent warming of the planet beyond 2 degrees Celsius. In light of this knowledge, we demand that starting at the city level, we enact a robust and emergency level response to the climate crisis. Specifically, we support:

- **Immediately creating a climate-crisis task force that will research and address what Jackson County can do to move our local economy to a zero-emissions economy by the year 2030**
- Putting local citizens to work in livable-wage jobs weatherizing existing homes and buildings and to retrofit existing buildings with renewable energy systems.
- Restoring ecosystems and waterways to mitigate the effects of climate change, and to protect the health of the humans, plants and animal species living in Jackson County
- Providing support for conservation agriculture, to develop a strong regional food system that will provide food for our community in times of climate uncertainty; working with local ranchers and farmers to support the removal of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; supporting carbon farming, silvopasture, and regenerative annual cropping practices.
- Investing in building a carbon-neutral local economy, moving to 100% renewable energy, retrofitting and updating existing energy grids towards renewable power sources by the year 2030
- Working with Native American leaders in the region to ensure that we are following time-tested practices and indigenous wisdom to care for the local environment
- Holding existing power sources, such as Duke Energy, to a high level of accountability, particularly as it applies to the cleaning of existing coal-ash spills and rate hikes for consumers
- Supporting the existing effort to establish a Youth Conservation Corps to mobilize young people toward mitigating the climate crisis; using the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Projects Administration of the 1930's as examples to lead us in establishing this specific project



Food security

We know that in Jackson County, 12.6% of county residents (approximately 7,500 people) are food insecure, 22% of children are food insecure, and 57% of the children in Jackson County schools are eligible for free/reduced-price meals. We believe that these numbers err on the low side, and that food insecurity is a major health concern for our county. Food insecurity is an ongoing state of anxiety. They do not know if or how they will be able to eat tomorrow or next week when their paycheck, food stamps, groceries from the food pantry run out. Hunger is an immediate circumstance and demands immediate and direct solutions. Specifically, we support:

- Guaranteed universal access to nutritious food and assistance programs, and the opposition of restriction policies
- Fight to provide safety nets: increase food stamp eligibility and level of payment
- Fight to provide expanded funding for nutrition programs for school-age students and the elderly
- Fighting to improve the systems to get food to those in need and to utilize food surplus, both fulfilling a need and having a strong effect on mitigating climate change
- The guarantee that all of our Jackson neighbors are confident that there will be food to eat tomorrow and the next day
- Treating food stamps as a form of aid independent from and unrelated to any other type of assistance being received
- Legislation that supports incentives to businesses for donating their food waste to pantries and organizations that feed the hungry

Housing

- Adequate and safe housing for all. We support programs that expand affordable housing access and oppose those that put up barriers to affordable housing. We support rent control, non-discriminatory housing, and renters' rights.
- **We support affordable housing as defined by the Housing and Urban Development agency as no more than 30% of someone's income going towards rent/housing-related expenses. Someone is 'housing burdened' if 50% or more of their income goes to rent or mortgage payments. We want to see Jackson County and the municipalities within Jackson County take action to increase the number of affordable units and reduce the number of housing burdened individuals in our area.**
- Expansion of low-barrier, nondiscriminatory shelter programs for those having trouble accessing affordable housing so that everyone has a bed to sleep in
- Ban the Box policies remove the question of criminal history from employment and housing applications. We support Ban the Box and would like to see questions about criminal history removed from rental applications in Jackson County.
- Grow and keep a working relationship with organizations such as Mountain Projects and the Waynesville Housing Authority. Stay current with ideas, concerns and resources needed
- Development of new housing projects must take into account environmental impacts, specifically on local waterways



Transportation

- Improvement and investment in universally accessible and affordable public transportation systems that serve all, especially the most vulnerable and those in rural isolation; **specifically we support safer municipal accessibility for populations with different levels of mobility, including auditory crosswalk signals, clearly marked and additional sidewalks.**
- We support Jackson County including expanded transportation in their budget and strategic plan

Education

- Public education that prepares us to be powerful citizens of a democracy
- The expansion of public funding to include more money per student in classrooms and funding for school supplies
- Provided school supplies and textbooks so that all children can benefit equitably from their education
- Strong public schools in every community and equitable outcomes for every child
- Free, high-quality public education from preschool through higher education
- We oppose efforts to privatize public education or push resources to for-profit education
- Proper training for educators to learn how to accommodate students with mental, physical, and developmental disabilities
- We support training for educators in developing empathy, sensitivity, and human behavior in the social environment for educators to accommodate students with various diversities regarding race, socioeconomic status, family support, physical abilities, trauma, sexual and gender identity, and any other different abilities
- Effective, equitable education for students with mental, physical, and developmental disabilities
- Increased pay for faculty and teachers of all levels, bringing North Carolina into a position of pay leadership on the national level
- Required classes in civics and the Constitution at the elementary, middle, and high school levels
- Less reliance on standardized testing to measure the quality and effectiveness of public education
- Increased community support and involvement within the school system
- More supportive services including school psychologists, social workers, nurses, mediators, etc.



Connection

We reject any attempt to divide working people; we see an attack on any of us as an attack on us all. We demand fair, humane, and compassionate treatment for all people.

Incarceration

Specifically, we support:

- A justice system that seeks to restore justice and equity to our communities in a way that relies minimally upon prisons and policing
- An end to profit-based prisons
- Rescinding and banning all laws that allow investigating overdose deaths as crime scenes and prosecution for drug-induced homicide
- Reforming Good Samaritan laws to include added protection against drug-induced homicide charges
- The use of restorative justice remediation options as an alternative to criminalization whenever possible
- A ban on the use of questions about prior convictions on job applications
- A care-based approach to address the overdose crisis that opposes sentencing enhancement and will not result in any net increase in arrest and incarceration rates and racial disparities
- An end to monetary conditions for pre-trial release (cash bail)
- Citation in lieu of arrest wherever possible, in order to avoid the unnecessary and avoidable costs of pretrial incarceration

Citizenship / Immigration

- An end to policies that are designed to target, divide, and deport our immigrant neighbors, such as 287(g) federal partnerships
- A comprehensive plan to bring our immigrant neighbors out of the shadows and into our democracy as citizens
- We support public accountability for law enforcement implementation of safety policies
- An end to collaboration with ICE on the part of any NC state or local agency

Access to Broadband Internet

We demand that all households gain access to affordable, high-speed internet service that is essential for accessing distance learning and healthcare.

Specifically, we support:

- Implementation of broadband service as a public utility, as opposed to the current privately-run, demand-driven networks. The broadband services can be sold by private or public entities, but they are always subject to public obligations to reach everyone at a reasonable price and meeting publicly-mandated quality standards.
- Leverage Federal (USDA) and State grants to subsidize the implementation of wireless and fiber infrastructure as needed to service households in both unincorporated areas and municipalities. Utilize a competitive bidding process in exchange



for a promise that the winning bidder will connect every home. The maximum price it could charge will be set by the government.

COVID-19

Since our members drafted the above platform, the COVID-19 crisis, and corresponding economic crisis, have hit our communities hard. In addition to the above, we support [the COVID-19 demands drafted by the North Carolina United For Survival Coalition](#), and include these demands in our 2020 statewide platform. Where possible, we support making the interventions described in the United For Survival platform permanent and ongoing.