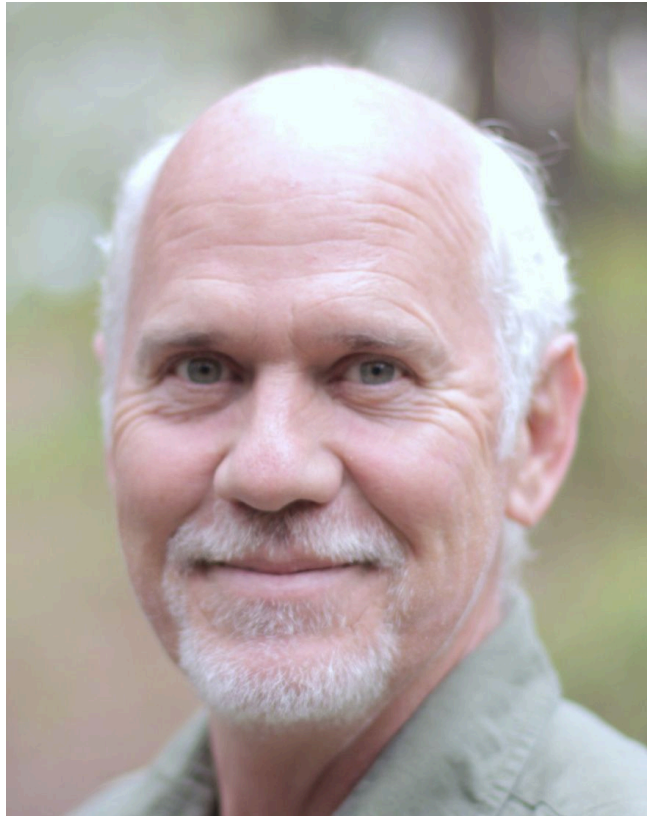

In My View: Politics, Policy, Programs and Progress

August 24, 2023



My primary objective when I get involved with any political endeavor is to foster good policies and programs. It is always my hope that if we elect capable and qualified people that they will lead us to progress. But the hard work starts after the election.

It is my ongoing mission to bring greater awareness of rural issues to all elected officials.

We can help our urban neighbors to recognize that if rural communities do better, California will do better.

Party Platform

I feel privileged that I have been reappointed to the California Democratic Party (CDP) Platform Committee. A platform is a statement of values and principles that represent a consensus of the members of the party.

The CDP updates and revises our platform every two years to ensure that it is focusing on emerging issues. Policies that are highlighted in our platform elevate these issues to the attention of elected officials who can

address them. This is the value of our effort.

The Rural Plank is a section of our platform that focuses like a laser on uniquely rural issues. I have also been reappointed as Chair of the Rural Plank Committee to help guide revisions to this rural policy document.

Preamble

I will highlight a few edited excerpts from the Rural Plank. This is what we want for rural California. This first policy statement underscores all the other specific policy goals listed below.

“In recognition of the unique opportunities and challenges in developing policies and programs that work in rural communities, California Democrats will encourage elected officials to consider the effect on rural California when proposing new policies or programs by evaluating whether the outcome is fair and feasible in rural communities.”

Current Plank

The current Rural Plank includes a few policy statements that will not change. This one may surprise some. California Democrats will: “Support policies that balance the lawful and responsible ownership of firearms for hunting, sport, and personal protection with the growing need for gun safety laws.”

When the first Rural Plank was written, we made a clear statement that Democrats in rural communities are not against all gun ownership.

We own guns and respect the rights of others to own guns.

However, there is a crisis in America with gun violence which must be addressed with common sense gun safety laws.

Timeless Policies

The Rural Plank contains other timeless policy objectives that will not be changed this round. California Democrats will:

“Support policies that consider limited financial capacity in rural areas when implementing state requirements... adjust compliance timelines and targets as needed and provide funding to support such programs where the local population cannot.”

“Sustain a lasting and respectful relationship with Tribal Nations and bolster efforts to support tribal sovereignty, economic development, culture, language, and restoration of ancestral land...”

Rural Caucus

The Rural Caucus of the California Democratic Party recently submitted proposed revisions of the Rural Plank. They offered thoughtful updates to address current issues facing rural California. When solutions are presented for consideration, this will lead more quickly to progress. The following are a few examples.

California Democrats will:

Water

“Support legislation that invests in and protects the natural resources of rural areas i.e., maintaining the health of rural watersheds, and funding the needed infrastructure for water storage. Secure ongoing funding in the State budget to provide safe, clean, affordable, and accessible drinking water to rural communities affected by water contamination or shortage.”

Funding Equity

“Support equitable distribution of state resources, programs, and tax dollars based on need, not solely population and alleviate the disproportionate burden on rural areas. Ensure equitable investment in rural healthcare, education, community development, and infrastructure, such as water, sewer, power and affordable, reliable, high speed, public safety grade internet.”

Internet

“Fulfill the commitment to close the “digital divide” by ensuring adequate funding in the state budget for the equitable and expeditious deployment of state owned and operated, open access, public safety grade broadband “middle mile” infrastructure, as deeply and densely as possible in rural areas, as well as “last mile” infrastructure...”

Housing

“Increase financing, subsidy options, and tax incentives to promote new affordable housing development including workforce housing in rural counties and facilitate access and help smaller communities of every socio-economic status navigate the application process...”

Insurance

“Prevent insurance companies from cancelling or declining to offer homeowner, property and fire insurance policies, and bolster the state funded insurance of last resort to provide comprehensive coverage.”

Just a Wish List?

Though this Rural Plank is part of a Democratic Party Platform, these are policies, values, and principles that most people will support.

Over the last three months the Platform Committee has held 6 public hearings to take testimony on possible changes to the California Democratic Platform (<https://cadem.org/our-platform/>).

We have heard recommendations on issues from healthcare to climate change to world peace.

It has been interesting to hear the ideas from all these smart, caring people who took the time to promote ways in which to make the world a better place. Of course, this is just a wish list if we don't follow up with political advocacy leading to better policies, programs, and progress.

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