



## **DPVA State Resolutions Package 2020**

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**DPVA State Resolutions Package 2020**  
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**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Endorses Mail-in Ballots as the Preferred Voting Method  
During the Coronavirus Pandemic and Other National Emergencies**

**Whereas,**

Democracy being dependent on the participation of citizens in their government, with voting being the most important and fundamental expression of such participation, it is reasonable and necessary to facilitate the opportunity for all citizens to vote, and to ensure that scheduled elections happen on time and with maximum participation.

In times when the nation isn't experiencing a national crisis, multiple impediments for Americans to cast their ballots already exist, including long lines, limited polling place hours, difficulties getting time off from work, hacking vulnerable electronic machines, inconvenient polling locations, transportation challenges, and voter suppression and intimidation.

Compounding our election insecurity, the United States is currently experiencing a crisis engendered by a global pandemic of uncertain duration. Scientists have speculated that the virus, COVID-19, may diminish in the summer, with a resurgence of the contagion in the fall in time for the November election.

To contain the spread of the disease, with which the country's healthcare system is ill-prepared to cope, health experts have recommended, and many elected officials have mandated, staying at home except for essential purposes and practicing social distancing when in public. This situation will likely continue for an indeterminate time period, as there is no known universally effective treatment for the disease, and a vaccine to immunize the population against it is not expected for the next 12 to 18 months.

Scientists have long predicted such an event and have warned that, given climate change and globalization, similar health crises are certain to occur in the future. Escalating climate change has also brought increasingly severe natural disasters and threatens normal societal processes unpredictably. Therefore, disruptions occurring during campaigns and elections can and should be anticipated and prepared for, whether from health issues, climate-related disasters, or other national emergencies.

In this presidential election year, preserving the safety and well-being of the voting population and prospective election staff poses particular challenges due to the pandemic and its uncertain course and duration. Voting by mail offers a solution. It provides voters a way to vote without fear of contracting COVID-19 and the time and safety to vote from the convenience of their own homes; saves taxpayers money on election administration; offers paper ballots that can be recounted, audited by hand, and not hacked; breaks down barriers to voting for seniors, working families, disabled Americans, and young voters; and even allows voters to avoid bad weather. Additionally, vote-by-mail states realized a 15% higher median turnout than polling-place-centric states during the 2018 primary, indicating that voting by mail leads to greater participation in our democracy.

Senator Amy Klobuchar's proposed legislation, *S.3529-The Natural Disaster and Emergency Ballot Act of 2020*, addresses interruptions to voting caused by disasters and emergencies by expanding early in-person voting and no-excuse absentee voting by mail to all states, and would reimburse states for additional costs in administering elections during the coronavirus pandemic. Similar legislation has been introduced in the House by Congressman Blumenauer of Oregon, and by Senator Ron Wyden in the Senate, *H.R.6202/S.3440--The Resilient Elections During Quarantines and National Disasters Act of 2020*. Senator Wyden is also a cosponsor of Senator Klobuchar's bill.

The optimal situation would be for mail-in ballots to be an option for all Federal elections, and not just limited to disasters; however, the pending bills, which require a mail-in option only during emergencies, could represent a significant first effort to ensure citizens' rights to vote, no matter the conditions.

For mail-in ballots to become a reliable and permanent replacement for in-person voting, problems with our current absentee mail-in ballot system must be addressed. The federal Election Assistance Commission (EAC) reported that in 2016, over half a million mailed-in ballots were rejected. A Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) study, *Losing Votes by Mail*, assessed the loss of mail-in ballots at 22%. If 80% of voters voted by mail in 2020, and this trend persisted, 25 million voters would lose their vote. The barriers to voting successfully by mail are particularly evident among non-white and low-income populations. Those ballots discarded are

disproportionately mailed by poorer, younger, non-white Americans. The CalTech/MIT Voting Technology Project report, *Whose Absentee Votes are Counted?*, revealed rejection rates higher for Democrats than Republicans, higher for younger than older voters, and higher for non-English ballots. Columbia Law professor Barbara Arnwine, founder of the Transformative Justice Coalition, observed that a move to mail-in voting is, “really, really dangerous to the Black vote.” Millions of low-income voters who rarely vote absentee will now have to fill out multi-step forms for the first time, which “will lead to disaster.”

Current absentee mail-in-ballot issues requiring attention include: (1) The requirement in eight states to have the mail-in ballot signed by a witness. Three states require the ballot to be notarized; (2) All but six states require the voter’s signature to be matched against registration signatures. If there is no match, the ballot is discarded. In 2016, 141,000 ballots were lost due to no match; (3) Federal law requires that states without same day registration provide a provisional ballot to those who are not on the rolls on election day. Minorities are far more likely to vote provisionally, but in the case of mail-in ballots, they will lose this protection; (4) When votes are read by scanners during in-person voting, unreadable votes rejected by the machine can be corrected on the spot, which is not possible with mail-in ballots; (5) Mail-in ballots may not be received by the voter. Four to 20% of any mailing goes astray; and (6) There is a major difference between rich and poor voters. Typically, poor voters are renters, and if they have moved, the United States Postal Service (USPS) will return a “do not forward” election ballot to election officials, even though federal law states that if a voter moves within their county, their registration is not lost.

The dominant impediment to passing vote-by-mail legislation and voting generally is the resistance by the Trump administration and Republicans to expanding voting rights. As a general rule, they prefer to see voting limited. President Trump stated on Fox & Friends that if voting rights spread, “you’d never have a Republican elected in this country again.”

Further, the USPS has indicated that it will run out of money by June of this year, and President Trump has stated that he will veto any bailout funding legislation. If the long-term Republican goal to force privatization of postal delivery is finally successful, mailing ballots will likely be far more expensive than currently, thereby suppressing more votes.

It is each state’s responsibility to secure the vote, and the bills mentioned above provide funding assistance to the states. Accordingly, the need to ensure the ability to vote for all eligible voters is so great that moving forward with mail-in-ballot legislation is essential and must be passed quickly to give sufficient time for implementation. Former President Barack Obama commented, “Let’s not use the tragedy of a pandemic to compromise our democracy. Check the facts of vote by mail.... Everyone should have the right to vote safely, and we have the power to make that happen. This shouldn’t be a partisan issue.”

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Endorses legislation requiring the states to provide expanded early voting and mail-in ballots for federal elections when declared natural disasters, pandemics, or other events render safe voting dangerous or impossible;
2. Endorses *S.3529--The Natural Disaster and Emergency Ballot Act of 2020*, and *H.R.6202/S.3440--The Resilient Elections During Quarantines and National Disasters Act of 2020*; and
3. Urges incorporation of the following amending provisions to ensure the vote for all citizens using mail-in ballots in federal elections:
  - a. Prohibition against the requirement for witnesses to, or notarization of, the ballot;
  - b. Prohibition against challenging voter signatures, unless a report that a ballot has been stolen has been made or the voter disclaims that signature;
  - c. Mass voter education effort to show voters how to complete the ballot and the return envelope;
  - d. Prohibition against so-called inactive voters, i.e., voters who have not voted in a certain number of past elections, being purged from the voter rolls and not allowed to vote;
  - e. Requirement that ballots be mailed to voters automatically, without their having to send a postcard or otherwise request a ballot;
  - f. Requirement that ballots be mailed with prepaid return envelopes; and
  - g. Provision to track and replace lost ballots.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Endorses Vote by Mail Nationwide for the 2020 General Election And Beyond**

**Whereas,**

As the COVID-19 outbreak has spread throughout the United States, many facets of our current society have been shown to have enormous gaps in opportunity. The outbreak has already forced many in-person events to become virtual in order for participants to continue to practice safe social-distancing, but one in-person event still needs our attention: the 2020 General Election. On November 3, 2020, millions of Americans across the nation will be eagerly waiting to cast their ballot for the candidates seeking the Presidency, the US Senate, the House of Representatives, and along with other assorted state and municipal elections. However, should the pandemic continue until then, in-person voting would be next-to impossible while following the current guidelines set out by the Center of Disease Control.

Beyond public health benefits, vote by mail also strengthens our democracy by increasing the opportunity for all citizens to vote at their convenience. Currently in the United States, five states conduct their voting entirely by mail: Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, and Utah. 21 other states allow for smaller elections like school board and other jurisdictional races to be conducted by mail. Currently in the Commonwealth of Virginia, non-excuse absentee voting was passed through the Virginia General Assembly but is not set to come into law until July 1 after many primaries for local elections have already been conducted. This method of voting allows for the voter to do so without traveling outside of their home, expands the electorate by making voting easier and more accessible, allows for person with disabilities and the elderly population to have better access to ballots, and cuts down on wait time significantly for ballots since in some states it has taken six hours for people to vote. Most importantly as it pertains to the current situation in the United States, it will allow for people to continue to exercise their right to vote without permitting them to convene in a place with 10 or more people. In 2020, voters in the US should not have to choose between their health and well-being or the right to vote. They should be able to have access to both equally.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention calls on:**

1. The Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

- a. Establish Universal non-excuse vote by mail options in federal races in every state in the United States for at least the general election on November 3, 2020 and urge state governments to adopt vote by mail options for state and local elections in 2020;
- b. Remove doctor's note, notary, and privacy information requirements from those 22 states that still require them to vote absentee;
- c. Eliminate witness requirement for mailed-in ballots;
- d. Support the Natural Disaster and Emergency Ballot Act introduced by US Senators Amy Klobuchar and Ron Wyden enact mail in voting during times of crisis; and
- e. Reintroduce the Universal Right to Vote by Mail Act of 2019 (H.R. 1604, S. 3299) for consideration for future federal elections after 2020.

2. The Virginia Governor to:

- a. Pursue vote by mail for all federal, state, and local elections that may be held in 2020; and
- b. Ensure easy access and clear-cut instructions for all Virginians to follow for voting by mail.



**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Entreats the United States Congress and the Trump Administration to  
Save the United States Postal Service from Bankruptcy as a Result of the Coronavirus Crisis**

**Whereas,**

Postmaster General Megan J. Brennan, in an April 2020 briefing to Congress, said, “The Postal Service is holding on for dear life, and unless Congress and the White House provide meaningful relief in the next stimulus bill, the Postal Service could cease to exist.” She stated that the Postal Service anticipates “a \$13 billion revenue loss directly to COVID-19 this fiscal year and \$54.3 billion [in] additional losses over ten years” and will “run out of cash this fiscal year” without immediate help from Congress and the Administration.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) comprises more than 31,600 retail locations and directly employs more than 650,000 people, including 100,000 veterans. The USPS undergirds a more than \$1.7 trillion mailing industry that employs more than 7.5 million people. These jobs are in jeopardy if the USPS does not receive the infusion of government funding it requires to survive.

The USPS, whose existence is enshrined in the US Constitution, is a trusted government institution dating back to 1792.

Every community in America relies on the Postal Service to deliver vital goods and services, including life-saving medications. The USPS delivered more than a billion shipments of prescription drugs last year, and that number is expected to grow rapidly as a result of the coronavirus crisis.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, heroic Postal Service workers have been serving a critical role in our nationwide relief efforts as essential frontline workers delivering critical medical supplies and protective equipment to healthcare and other workers as well as necessities to Americans sheltering at home. “The USPS is a vital part of the public health response. Only postal workers reach all 160 million households and businesses 6 days a week,” wrote Sara Nelson, Association of Flight Attendants president.

A halt in Postal Service operations will have grave consequences across the country. These negative effects will be most dire in rural communities, where the USPS is a lifeline to millions of Americans relying primarily on the Postal Service to deliver vital staples to their homes and small businesses.

The USPS provides crucial infrastructure for the 2020 census, and Americans are relying on Postal Service workers to deliver millions of coronavirus relief checks from the end of April through September.

More than 25% of votes cast in recent elections were distributed through the mail, and as the coronavirus is creating a likely necessity to vote by mail in the 2020 election, the USPS will be indispensable in facilitating and ensuring the right of every citizen to vote.

According to the *Washington Post*, President Trump in March personally blocked an emergency funding package for the USPS. Some lawmakers have speculated that Trump is hoping to fulfill a longtime Republican goal of privatizing mail delivery by allowing the Postal Service’s coronavirus revenue losses to finally bankrupt the agency. Preceding this crisis, the 2006 Republican-led Congress established an onerous legislative burden, unlike any other public or private entity, that the USPS pre-fund its retiree health care benefits. That law put the agency on a precarious and unsustainable financial footing. “At the end of the day, they have an agenda,” said Mark Dimondstein, president of the American Postal Workers Union, which represents more than 220,000 postal workers. “Raise prices, reduce worker benefits and reduce services, make it appear more profitable and set it up for sale [...] The Covid crisis should not be used to achieve political aims.” Other critics assert that Trump’s refusal to fund the USPS is related to the Republican push against a vote-by-mail system during the pandemic.

Among other outcomes, privatized postal services would eliminate unprofitable post offices, especially affecting rural communities, and make basic postal services unaffordable for many.

House Government Operations Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Gerry Connolly said, “We cannot allow the Postal Service to collapse. To do so would deepen our nation’s economic crisis and eliminate an important lifeline for individuals who rely on the Postal Service’s 1 billion lifesaving prescription deliveries and eviscerate the very infrastructure we need to administer the upcoming elections.”

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** entreats:

A. The United States Congress, as requested by the bipartisan Postal Service Board of Governors, to provide in emergency, bipartisan, veto-proof coronavirus relief legislation:

1. A \$25-billion emergency appropriation to offset coronavirus-related losses;
2. A \$25-billion grant to fund “shovel-ready” projects to modernize the Postal Service; and
3. Access to \$25 billion in unrestricted borrowing authority from the Treasury.

B. President Trump to cease attacking and threatening to veto emergency USPS funding legislation.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Supports Preservation of the United States Postal Service and Adoption of Postal Banking**

### **Whereas,**

Since the founding of the United States, the Postal Service has been a critical part of our infrastructure, enabling inexpensive and efficient communications between and among every address in the nation. The Postal Service is required by law to provide every American, no matter where located, with uniform services at uniform prices. Its famous motto is, "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds." Today it remains essential to delivering goods and information; even private carriers often rely on it to deliver small packages over the last mile. Because of the Postal Service's importance in the life of our society, its establishment is authorized by the Constitution.

The Postal Service plays a particularly critical role now, with pandemic-related travel restrictions and breakdowns in other distribution channels. And it will be essential to ensuring a credible Presidential election. It is unlikely there will be a vaccine against Covid-19 by November and in-person voting will therefore be dangerous. Voting by mail rather than in person would facilitate a fuller and fairer election. Many states, including important swing states, already allow their citizens to vote by mail for any reason. Others could adopt voting by mail in time for the election. Despite some Republican opposition, it is not clear whether universal voting by mail would help Republicans or Democrats. But it would ensure a fairer election, with higher turnout, and the results would better reflect the will of the American people.

Even before the pandemic hit, the U.S. Postal Service faced serious financial problems. In 2006 Congress passed a law restricting its business practices, based on the then-current business environment. Shortly afterwards, advances in the convenience of electronic communications led to sharp declines in demand for its most profitable services. The requirements of the 2006 law became simply unworkable. Since the onset of the pandemic and the shutdown of much economic activity, already low mail volume is estimated to be down as much as 30%. The Postal Service now faces a crisis. One way to address it is to expand the range of services the Postal Service may offer.

In addition, there is an unmet need for some new services that the Postal Service could provide. Postal banking could offer convenient and efficient banking services to a portion of the public who are not being served by our existing banking institutions. Many US citizens lack access to proper banking institutions, including but not limited to the homeless, the financially illiterate, immigrants, undocumented peoples, and those living in rural areas. The US previously had a postal banking system wherein every American had an account with the United States Postal Savings System (USPSS), run by the predecessor to the US Postal Service (USPS). 25 percent of US households are either unbanked or underbanked. More than half of those people do not have enough money to bank in current financial institutions, 30 percent say they cannot trust big banks, and 9 percent inconvenienced by the location of banks being too distant from their home.

The initial USPSS was limited in scope and scale, it provided easy access to banking for immigrants, people suffering under economic distress such as during the Great Depression, and for the wealthy alike. Banking today is far more complicated and financial literacy is a recognized problem for Americans seeking to attain a comfortable life. In times of crisis, Federal or State governments may need easy access to offer direct cash-transfers to citizens in order to alleviate financial stress. The current banking system is dominated by private banking institutions that, since the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act in

1999, have proven to be far too risky and that a public option for banking is appropriate to provide both security and competition for the American people. New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand has proposed a bill (Postal Banking Act) that would provide a banking service through the USPS and additionally provide loans for small businesses to compete with predatory payday lenders.

In recent years, many Republicans have advocated for privatizing the Postal Service, placing it in the hands of a for-profit entity. Trump has expressly supported this. But a for-profit entity has different incentives than a public institution. A public post office is dedicated to the public interest and to carrying communications and goods to everyone. It is well-positioned to offer other needed services as well. A for-profit entity is required to maximize profits for its shareholders; the interests and needs of its customers rank second. Privatization of postal services in other countries has resulted in higher costs and less service . In this large country, privatization would especially threaten service to rural areas, which are expensive to reach. As we have relied heavily on the postal system to disseminate the stimulus checks promised by the government, many Americans do not have a place to put them, so they rely on same day check cashing establishments. However, if those same people were to have their own accounts through the postal system, this would create a much more equitable banking operation for them to receive funds from the government that they so desperately need.

It is time to provide the Post Office with an emergency infusion of the cash it needs to continue to operate effectively for the coming year, and then promptly to enact legislation correcting the problems with the 2006 law and stabilizing the Post Office for the future. Adoption of postal banking would assist in meeting this goal. Finally, Congress must preserve the Post Office as an institution dedicated to the public interest.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

1. Appropriate the funds needed by the Post Office to continue its regular operations for the next twelve months;
2. Formulate and pass legislation that would place the Post Office on a stable financial foundation for the foreseeable future;
3. Affirm that the United States Post Office is a public institution, dedicated to fulfilling the nation's communications and distribution needs; and
4. Enact legislation adopting postal banking to provide inexpensive and reliable banking services for Americans for whom such services are not currently available.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Condemns Republican Attacks on Seniors and Urges Democrats in Congress and  
Democratic Presidential Candidate Joe Biden to Protect Lifetime Earned Benefits**

**Whereas,**

The Trump Administration and Republican Party have repeatedly shown blatant disregard for the well-being of America's senior citizens and have prioritized corporate greed and tax breaks for the wealthy above our seniors' financial security.

Since initial reports of the outbreak of COVID-19 in January 2020, the President has publicly downplayed the severity of the pandemic and while medical experts were pushing for longer periods of social distancing, Trump suggested ending social distancing policies sooner to restore the economy at the risk of increasing the rate and severity of the pandemic spread. Trump also minimized the case fatality rate of the pandemic, projected to be approximately 1-3%, of which over 90% would be people over age 50, with the oldest Americans at a substantially higher risk.

Trump's rhetoric has spread throughout the Republican Party as fast as the pandemic, with elected officials such as Senator Ron Johnson (WI) stating, "We don't shut down our economies because tens of thousands of people die from the common flu [...] getting coronavirus is not a death sentence except for maybe no more than 3.4% of our population (and) I think probably far less" and Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick, saying "[...] there are more important things than living. And that's saving this country for my children and my grandchildren and saving this country for all of us."

While Republican elected officials have suggested that seniors should be ready to sacrifice their health and potentially their lives to prevent an economic downturn, Fox News promoted the position that the media coverage of the pandemic was at best overblown and even potentially a politically motivated hoax. With a median viewer age of 65, this rhetoric from Fox News, fueled by Trump and the Republican Party, has directly put the lives of its most loyal viewers at risk.

But the Trump Administration has made its disdain for senior citizens clear right from the start of Trump's presidency. In his 2018 budget, Trump proposed killing the State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP), which helps seniors manage their Medicare and private insurance coverage; eliminating the Senior Community Social Employment Program, which helps seniors find jobs; and cutting the National Institute on Aging. Furthermore, the President's proposed 2018 budget severely cut funding for Meals on Wheels, and the administration has even discussed ending senior discounts at national parks.

After enacting massive tax cuts for corporations and the top 1% of individuals, and adding over \$4.7 trillion to the national debt, Trump and Republicans have turned to cutting Medicare and Social Security to balance their budget. Trump's 2021 proposed budget would cut Medicare by 6% through draconian measures that could cause seniors to lose access to their preferred doctors, raise out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs, and make obtaining medical care more expensive when it is needed the most. Trump's budget also proposes cuts to the Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs that provide financial stability to low-income disabled adults and children. Americans between the ages of 60 and 66 are 14 times more likely to need SSDI than Americans between the ages of 30 and 34. Through aggressive tax cuts and deficit spending, the Republican strategy is to "starve the beast" and force excessive deficits to scare the American people into accepting the loss of their paid and earned Social Security benefits, much like the party is trying to scare Americans into sacrificing the well-being of our elders to reduce the economic impact of this pandemic.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Condemns the Trump Administration and Republican Party's:
  - a. Dangerous and disgraceful rhetoric in response to public efforts to control the spread of COVID-19, increasing the threat to those most vulnerable, especially our senior citizens;
  - b. Continued attacks on seniors through eliminating programs and spending that specifically benefit seniors; and
  - c. Proposals to cut Medicare and Social Security benefits.
2. Urges Democrats in Congress and 2020 Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden to:
  - a. Expose, condemn, and oppose any elected official who prioritizes corporate special interests over the health and well-being of our seniors;
  - b. Defend the federal programs that support America's seniors; and
  - c. Condemn and oppose any budget or spending plan that cuts Social Security or Medicare benefits, which seniors have earned and paid for over a lifetime of working and supporting our economy.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Enacting Legislation to Protect Essential Workers' Rights During the Pandemic and  
Strengthening the Labor Movement for Long-Term Worker Protection**

**Whereas,**

While on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, millions of healthcare workers, farmworkers, grocery store clerks, trash collectors, postal workers, and others in essential jobs are providing our communities with the medical services, basic supplies, food, water, and sanitation on which we are dependent, the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the systemic inequalities, unjust compensation, and inadequate protections under which most of these essential workers have been laboring.

Since the 1970s, the unrelenting anti-union campaigns and policies of corporate interests and policymakers representing the highest earning 1% have succeeded in severely weakening unions. Declining unionization has made it much harder for working people to collectively bargain for better wages, benefits, and working conditions, and has fueled rising inequality. As union coverage has declined and the voice of workers has correspondingly diminished, many of the key workplace standards past generations counted on have been eroded.

Unions have strong positive effects not only on union workers themselves but also on comparable non-union workers, as unions set standards for entire industries and occupations. Unions improve the health and safety practices of workplaces and ensure that employers are held accountable. Union workers are more likely to be covered by employer-provided health insurance and have greater access to paid sick days. Union workers earn 22% more, on average, than non-union workers. In America today, 72% of union workers have a defined benefit pension plan that guarantees an income in retirement, compared with just 14 percent of non-union workers.

The coronavirus pandemic has heightened the vast disparity between American workers represented by unions and those without collective bargaining rights. In an age in which millions of workers are being underpaid and overworked with no health insurance, pensions, or paid sick leave, the American labor movement, despite suffering endless attacks from corporations and right-wing politicians, continues to be the institution most capable of protecting, advancing, and improving the pay, benefits, and safety of all workers.

Decades of eroded worker rights and protections have intensified the jeopardy to essential workers during the coronavirus pandemic, and the United States must enact immediate legislation to provide the necessary protections and compensation they need to sustain the country.

In the longer term, a strong and growing labor movement is necessary to build a resilient, just, and equitable society with the capacity to respond to future pandemics and national crises. Labor will be a vital partner in expanding universal health care for all Americans, protecting "gig" workers from exploitation, and ensuring that unfettered corporate capitalism does not further consolidate its disproportionate control of the U.S. economy. A strong labor movement grows the middle-class, preserves democratic principles, and levels the playing field between workers and management in the political process.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Endorses:

- a. Legislation that would: expand workplace protections, including providing personal protective equipment (PPE) and hazard pay for frontline workers, universal healthcare and paid sick leave for all essential workers; and provide American workers with a monthly basic income, and a moratorium on rent, mortgage and evictions for the duration of the crisis;
- b. Repeal of Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act, which has allowed 28 states to pass legislation that eliminates the ability of unions to collect dues from those who benefit from union contracts and activities but are not union members, undermining the unions' representation of workers;
- c. Repeal of Virginia's "Right to Work" laws; and
- d. Passage of *S.1306--Protecting the Right to Organize Act of 2019* pending in the U.S. Senate.

2. Commends:

- a. Congressman Bobby Scott (VA-03), chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor, for introducing *H.R.2474--Protecting the Right to Organize (PRO) Act of 2019* to strengthen protections for workers' rights to organize a union and bargain for higher wages, better benefits, and safer working conditions;
- b. Virginia Congresspersons Don Beyer, Gerry Connolly, Elaine Luria, Don McEachin, Abigail Spanberger, and Jennifer Wexton for cosponsoring the PRO Act and declaring their support for the repeal of Virginia's Right to Work laws;
- c. The 2020 Virginia General Assembly for passing legislation to raise the minimum wage and allow limited public-sector collective bargaining; and
- d. The Democratic Party of Virginia for unanimously ratifying its resolution entitled *The Democratic Party of Virginia Petitions for the Repeal of Virginia's "Right to Work" Laws*.

3. Opposes the Virginia Governor's legislative amendments delaying the minimum wage increase and limited public-sector collective bargaining. It is unconscionable that many essential workers on whom Virginians depend most during the pandemic are earning the Commonwealth's paltry \$7.25/hour minimum wage. The Virginia AFL-CIO President said, "You cannot support workers if you do not believe all workers should have the right to form a union, and you cannot support unions if you do not believe that unions should have the ability to collectively bargain.... Nothing in the collective bargaining bill would have required a locality to participate, which makes its delay all the more nonsensical and cruel."



**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Public Sector Collective Bargaining**

**Whereas,**

For decades, Virginia was one of three American states with a total ban on public sector collective bargaining. As a result, public sector workers in Virginia are paid between 18.3% and 20.8% less than private sector workers in Virginia and earn approximately 8.9% less in benefits than public sector workers in other states. This has made it especially difficult to attract and retain public school teachers, firefighters, custodians, school nurses, social workers, police officers, and other crucial public service workers in Virginia.

Virginia public employees need a voice on the job now more than ever to ensure safe working conditions as they risk their lives to transport coronavirus patients, sanitize public buildings and spaces, feed students who rely on free or subsidized lunches, and more. Collective bargaining is also vital to ensure that state and local governments do not force public employees to bear the brunt of the ongoing economic downturn with further cuts and privatization of public services. Finally, if the U.S. could permit collective bargaining in war production industries during WWII, then surely Virginia can allow public employees to collectively bargain while trusting local governments and unions to make any necessary adjustments in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Governor to allow all state and relevant local government employees to collectively bargain as soon as July 1, 2020.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Urges Securing Workplace Protections for LGBTQ Employees**

**Whereas,**

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. §2000e-2) prevents employers from discriminating against any individual “because of such individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.”

However, some federal courts have found that sexual orientation and gender identity are not protected classes under the Civil Rights Act, and are not afforded protections against discrimination. Currently, only twenty-one states have enacted statutes that protect LGBTQ employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in public and private employment.

Roughly 4.5% of the U.S. population identifies as LGBTQ, comprising eleven-million members of the workforce. 25% of these LGBT employees report experiencing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the past year - half of whom said it negatively impacted their work environment. Further, transgender employees experience unemployment at twice the rate of the population as a whole, often due to discrimination.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention**

1. Applauds the Virginia General Assembly for passing the “Virginia Values Act,” signed into law by Governor Ralph Northam on April 11, 2020, which prohibits discrimination in public and private employment on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.
  
2. Calls on the Virginia Congressional Delegation to support federal legislation to amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to explicitly include protections against workplace discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Urges Instituting a Federal Job Guarantee**

### **Whereas,**

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has resulted in unprecedented economic disruption. One out of every three Americans may lose their jobs. Our infrastructure and critical supply chains are being disrupted. As a result of stay-at-home orders and social-distancing requirements, many people living paycheck to paycheck have lost their jobs and healthcare and the ability to provide for those who depend on them. The brunt of this crisis is being disproportionately borne by workers who are among the lowest paid, but who are now recognized as essential, especially those who have been racialized, marginalized, and displaced in processes that have commodified labor. Many of these workers lack basic protections because of labor carve-outs that are a direct legacy of slavery.

At this moment of economic and ecological upheaval, when pervasive economic insecurity and racial exclusion exist alongside concentrated wealth and a global climate crisis, we must rebuild our economy to produce economic security and dignity for all. Over four thousand academics world-wide have issued a call to democratize and decommodify work and to remediate the harms of our extractive system. They cite Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment and affirm that a key to their call is a Job Guarantee.

Struggles for freedom and justice and recovery from crises in the United States have long demanded a job guarantee. Franklin Delano Roosevelt included a guarantee of living-wage work in his Second Bill of Rights. Sadie Tanner Mosel Alexander saw guaranteed employment as key to addressing national and world problems. Martin Luther King Jr. called for guaranteed jobs in his campaigns for racial and economic justice, and Coretta Scott King carried forward that dream through the National Committee for Full Employment/Full Employment Action Council that tried to implement it through the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act of 1978. A job guarantee was a mainstay of Democratic Party platforms before the 1970s.

The failed policies, from Reagan to Trump, of handouts for corporations and austerity for the people have led to a resurgence of calls for a job guarantee. Dozens of Democratic candidates in the 2018 midterm elections ran on a job guarantee, and a job guarantee was a major theme for the candidates in the 2020 Democratic presidential primary. A job guarantee is now at the center of pending legislation including a visionary plan for a mobilization for racial, economic, and environmental justice on the scale of the global climate crisis and for recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Federal Job Guarantee would set a dignified baseline for our economy, including a \$15.00 per hour minimum wage with benefits, and would provide a transition between jobs and into employment outside the program. A full-employment economy would improve the conditions of labor and the quality of life for all people. The full employment experience of WWII saw increased integration of society and compressed income inequality. Peacetime full employment promises even greater gains.

A federally funded, locally administered job guarantee that takes people where they are, as they are, would create good jobs for all, including building workforce skills in productive and meaningful work while building stronger communities, prioritizing those most left behind. It would start to address the inequity that is now showing up as vastly disproportionate death rates of COVID-19. It would shore up and complement existing safety-net programs and raise the floor for all workers by strengthening labor's bargaining power through the universal public employment option. And it would stabilize the economy through counter-cyclical federal spending automatically targeted to mend the social, economic, and environmental fabric where most needed,

building a stronger, more resilient economy. A job guarantee rejects directing public resources to produce private profits and rejects seeking to discipline the poor through workfare. It instead reimagines work to create community and expand our humanity in building a better world out of the crisis.

This program should be started now, while we are in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis. The millions of people who have lost their jobs are contributing to public health by staying home. They should be justly compensated and brought into organized community-oriented efforts that will help their communities get through the crisis and help them transition back into work when our economy starts to rebuild.

**Therefore, be it Resolved, the Convention:**

A. Commends for their contributions to advancing the rights of labor:

1. The Fight for \$15 campaign and other collective action taken by unions and workers through organizing on their own behalf;
2. Democratic members of the Virginia General Assembly who introduced and supported legislation to raise Virginia's minimum wage; and
3. Efforts of the Democratic Members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation to raise the minimum wage, close racist and ableist wage loopholes dating from the New Deal and support a job guarantee.

B. Calls upon the Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

1. Pursue legislation building on and improving H.R. 1000, the Humphrey-Hawkins 21st Century Full Employment and Training Act, to implement a Job Guarantee; and
2. Raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour as soon as possible; and apply that minimum wage to all workers regardless of industry, including but not limited to: farmworkers, waiters and waitresses, in-home healthcare workers, hotel workers, and industries that primarily employ persons with disabilities.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Supports Paid Family Leave**

### **Whereas,**

The United States shares the dubious distinction with Suriname and Papua New Guinea of being the only countries in the United Nations that do not require employers to provide paid time off for new parents. The countries that require paid family leave have a variety of ways in which it is mandated and paid for (in much of Europe through social security but other parts of the world have different systems).

Employers in Virginia are covered by the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”) that allows eligible employees to take unpaid leave, with the right to reinstatement. FMLA leave is available if an employee needs time off to: recuperate from a serious health condition, care for a family member with a serious health condition, bond with a new child, handle qualifying exigencies arising out of a family member’s military service, or care for a family member who suffered a serious injury during active duty in the military.

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (“FFCRA”), signed into law on March 18, 2020, amended the FMLA to provide for up to 12 weeks of emergency, job-protected leave if an employee is unable to work or telework due to a need to care for a child under 18 years of age because that child’s school or place of care has closed or the child’s child care provider is unavailable due to a public health emergency with respect to COVID-19. Employers are responsible for paying out the leave benefits themselves but will be eligible for tax credits.

This additional expense is likely to create financial difficulties for many of the employers with fewer than 500 employees that the FMLA amendments apply to, who are themselves reeling from the impact of the coronavirus on the economy. It is hoped that the Department of Labor and Internal Revenue Service can work out an efficient way to get these payments reimbursed in a timely manner, so as to not force more companies out of business.

These provisions are due to expire on December 31, 2020. Nevertheless, they open the door to the United States joining most of the rest of the world in providing paid family leave for new parents at the Federal level. The mechanisms put into place to get employers accustomed to providing paid leave for coronavirus-related needs can be transferred to getting employers accustomed to providing maternal and paternal leave for new parents and get the federal government accustomed to providing tax credits in a timely manner to companies providing this leave.

At the state level, in the 2020 Virginia State Assembly session, two bills were introduced but not adopted that would have allowed an employee to get up to 80 percent of their weekly pay for up to 12 weeks for any family issue including death in the family or maternity leave. The proposed laws would have provided 80 percent of the employee's average weekly wage, not to exceed 80 percent of the state weekly wage, which amount is required to be adjusted annually to reflect changes in the statewide average weekly wage. The measure capped the duration of paid leave at 12 weeks in any application year. The bills would require the Virginia Employment Commission to establish and administer a paid family and medical leave program with benefits paid to eligible employees for family and medical leave. Funding for the program would be provided through premiums assessed to employers and employees. The bills also provide self-employed individuals the option of participating in the program. California, Connecticut, Washington, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia also have state mandated FMLAs and other states have proposed state FMLA bills. Each state with a state mandated paid FMLA sets their own rules including reasons for paid leave, who is considered a family member and contribution amounts.

### **Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention calls on:**

1. The U.S. Congress to amend the Family and Medical Leave Act to provide for paid, job-protected maternal and paternal leave for new parents, along the lines of, and using lessons learned from, the emergency family leave provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act; and
2. The Virginia Democratic General Assembly members to mandate state paid FMLA.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Paid Sick Leave for Employees of All American Companies**

**Whereas,**

There is constituent concern that urges paid sick leave be given to all workers.

Sick employees going to work magnify the current public health and economic crisis exponentially.

The United States has no required paid sick leave.

No one should have to choose between working while sick and feeding their family.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** urges paid sick leave of at least 10 days per year be afforded to employees of all companies which have American ties (i.e. with employees, owners, or stockholders in the US).

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports the Right of First Refusal for Workers to Buy Their Company**

**Whereas,**

Age-old questions of ownership, control, and distribution in our economy remain as important as ever. In fostering the creation of communities and workplaces driven by values of solidarity, cooperation, and justice, workplace democracy and worker ownership are crucial, powerful tools, and they can and should play an important role in rebuilding our economy after the COVID-19 crisis has abated.

There is already a long-standing policy agenda for worker ownership that has become a powerful and effective consensus in many countries. This agenda is behind the Employee Share Ownership Plan in the 1974 Employee Retirement Income Security Act. It is also the agenda behind both the recent tax incentives for employee ownership trusts passed in the United Kingdom, and United States Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand's recently passed 2018 legislation extending Small Business Administration assistance for worker cooperatives and ESOPs.

These have produced real improvements for countless workers, but they can only take us so far. We need a policy agenda for worker ownership compatible with the systemic change we know we need on a global scale. If we want to transition to an economy that does not drive catastrophic climate change, dispossession and violence against people of color and the developing world, and gross inequalities of power, income, and wealth, then we need to develop a vision of worker ownership that can contribute to that transition, rather than one that aligns the interests of worker-owners with the shareholders of extractive private corporations that are the problem in our society.

To achieve this, we need a set of institutions and laws that could enable a substantial share of the economy to transition to democratic worker ownership with "sheltering institutions" that provide a countervailing force against the rigid demands of the market. The aim should be to offer a path forward for worker ownership for those of us who believe that system change is necessary.

Specifically, we must create a pluralistic "institutional ecosystem" to surround worker-owned businesses and a legal framework that provides an effective right of first refusal to workers to purchase sites and companies that are being closed or sold. This would massively broaden the pool of candidate companies and sites that can be legally transitioned to democratic worker ownership if given the resources (through the right of first refusal) and substantially deepen the financial and technical resources available to workers at companies and sites within that "candidate pool" to transition their workplace to democratic ownership.

With these policies in place, societies will be far better positioned to prevent mass layoffs as a result of the so-called "silver tsunami" of retiring baby-boomer owners of small-to-medium business enterprises, many of whom currently close their companies at retirement or sell them to extractive culture capitalists who asset-strip the firms with little protection for workers. In many localities, extensive legal, financial and technical support for worker ownership is the best option for maintaining community stability in the face of an inevitable and significant economic transition—one that can be reprogrammed to serve the interests of the many in order to prevent it being exploited by the few.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on:

1. The Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

- a. Enact legislation to guarantee a right of first refusal, whereby workers will be given the right to buy a company when it goes up for sale, is closing, or if a factory is moving overseas based on The Next System Project’s Right to Own Proposal;
- b. Pass the “Worker Ownership, Readiness, and Knowledge (WORK) Act”, which would provide more than \$45 million in funding to states to establish and expand employee ownership centers, which provide training and technical support for programs promoting employee ownership; and
- c. Pass the “United States Employee Ownership Bank Act”, which would provide \$500 million in low-interest rate loans and other financial assistance to help workers purchase businesses through an employee stock ownership plan or a worker-owned cooperative.

2. The Virginia Governor and Democratic General Assembly members to:

- a. Create a non-profit worker-ownership center for Virginia that provides training and technical support for programs that promote worker ownership, based on the successful example of the Ohio Employee Ownership Center;
- b. Enact legislation to set up a revolving loan program to help finance transitions to worker ownership – similar to HB17-1214 in Colorado;
- c. Enact legislation to guarantee a right of first refusal, whereby workers will be given the right to buy a company when it goes up for sale, is closing, or if a factory is moving overseas and will receive financial assistance from the revolving loan program to make that possible; and
- d. enact legislation that gives preference to worker cooperatives in state bids.



## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Urges the Adoption of a Universal Basic Income**

### **Whereas,**

During this pandemic, Americans have been hard hit by the shutdown of consumer spending. The United States faced a 14.7 percent unemployment rate in April, and job losses are continuing to accumulate. Nevertheless, we applaud our Virginia delegation for passing CARES and for continuing to push for CARES 2 and other support. Unfortunately, the one-time payment has not gone far enough. It left college students and others who are older than 18 but counted as dependents without funding, has not been duplicated or continued by the Senate despite the worsening economic picture, and has been mismanaged by an overworked and underfunded IRS and the oversight of Trump's administration.

Outside the pandemic, income inequality was already ravaging our middle and lower classes, leading to deaths from despair, a decreasing average lifespan, the lowest rates of entrepreneurship in 40 years, and higher rates of health and social problems. Even before the pandemic and accompanying recession, 57% of Americans were unable to pay an unexpected \$500 bill, while approximately 40 million Americans lived below the poverty line.

Furthermore, after we recover from the current economic crisis, there is a coming wave of mass automation that will further disrupt the already precarious economic conditions Americans face. According to McKinsey researchers, up to one-third of American workers could lose their jobs to automation by 2030, and half of all current work activities are automatable with existing technology.

Universal basic income (UBI) provides financial support for labor that is currently unvalued or undervalued, including traditionally female labor such as caretaking and stay at home motherhood and other culturally and civically valuable activities such as artmaking and volunteering. It also supports groups that are unable to work, such as the elderly, the disabled, and the young.

UBI has had broad support from across the political spectrum, making it a unique policy proposal; it is both palatable to the Republican-controlled Senate as well as effective in achieving progressive goals. It has been espoused by conservative thinker Milton Freidman, Martin Luther King Jr., and was even nearly implemented in the 1970s under Richard Nixon.

UBI experiments have led to happier citizens, as seen in the Finland trial of UBI, and do not lead to a drop-in productivity. For example, Alaska has had a version of UBI since the 1980s, based around annual dividend payments tied to oil production. Researchers found that the funding did not significantly decrease aggregate employment. Meanwhile, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Casino Dividend in North Carolina has improved the education levels and mental health of tribal members and decreased addiction and crime. Replicated on a national level, the United States could in the long term reap savings from a decrease in crime-related spending, enabling the United States to begin to dismantle the industrial-prison complex.

UBI assuages fears of disincentivizing workers, the so-called "unemployment benefit trap," by providing the funding for all citizens, regardless of income level or unemployment status. It would lower the stigma around the payments and would not accidentally incentivize behavior such as intentionally staying at a lower income level to avoid losing benefits. It is simpler than other forms of welfare, which currently require means testing and an intimate grasp of complex regulations. Not to mention, the current system of welfare management through tax

rebates overwhelmingly favors Americans wealthy enough to hire tax preparation services to file their taxes for them, which inevitably hurts those who need assistance the most.

The Automatic Boost to Communities Act would provide emergency funding - \$2,000 a month for citizens, residents, and non-citizens who have been in the United States for more than 3 months as of December 13, 2019 - for the duration of the current crisis. Equally important, it would continue to provide funding of \$1,000 a month for a year after the official end to the crisis, as determined by the termination of the emergency declared on March 13, 2020 or the return to pre-recession levels of unemployment. This continued investment in Americans will create social mobility, infuse at-risk communities with investment, and assist more broadly as we pivot from an immediate pandemic-induced crisis to the coming automation-induced crisis.

As an additional long-term stimulus and antidote to sky-rocketing wealth inequality, the U.S. Congress should create a national social wealth fund similar to the aforementioned Alaska Permanent Fund. A social wealth fund is a publicly owned pool of money and other assets, such as stocks or land, that can be used for socially beneficial purposes. The key ideas undergirding a social wealth fund are that 1) ownership of economic assets should be distributed more equitably throughout society; 2) the public, collectively, has the right to share in the benefits of owning such assets; and 3) certain goods and services in society should be provided without cost or without concern for people's ability to pay (and that we should cover the cost of delivering those services without resorting to high rates of taxation on ordinary working families). Most traditional sovereign wealth funds, while similar, have been capitalized through proceeds from fossil fuel or mineral extraction. Social wealth funds can use myriad funding alternatives, such as share levies on large profitable corporations, wealth and inheritance taxes on the super wealthy, revenues from leasing public assets (such as the electromagnetic spectrum), carbon or financial transaction taxes, or simply through new money creation (as the Federal Reserve did with quantitative easing in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis).

A national social wealth fund for the United States would gradually accumulate assets for the fund to manage, such as stocks, bonds, and real estate, and would grant a share to all citizen-owners and pay them a universal basic dividend each year from the investment income earned by the fund. As the assets under management increase, the value of the shares held by the citizen-owners will increase, causing wealth inequality to fall.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls upon the Democratic National Committee to support and upon the Virginia Delegation to the United States Congress to co-sponsor and work to:

1. Pass H.R.6553 - Automatic Boost to Communities Act;
2. Support a review of the possibility of permanently extending the Automatic Boost to Communities Act's \$1000 a month funding; and
3. Enact legislation to create a national social wealth fund based on the Social Wealth Fund for America proposal from People's Policy Project.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Supports Housing for All**

### **Whereas,**

Housing is a universal necessity of life. Without it, participating in most of social, political, and economic life is impossible. Yet, today, we see signs of a housing crisis all around us. Affordable public housing units are scarce. The units that do exist are often in poor condition, and, as a result, over ten million existing public housing units are demolished every year. While rents are skyrocketing in large housing markets like New York or San Francisco, there has also been a spike in the number of Americans in rural areas who spend over half of their limited incomes on housing. Incredibly, while wages have stagnated throughout the country, average housing prices have gone up by 188 percent over the past three decades, while the median rent has increased by more than 60 percent since 1960. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that over half a million people are sleeping out on the streets or in homeless shelters on any given night because they do not have the money to put a roof over their heads. The trends are similar in Virginia. The state minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour, yet one would need to earn an average of \$23/hr to afford a two-bedroom apartment. We likewise have a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low income households, whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income. In Northern Virginia, luxury housing makes up the bulk of new units and the expansion of committed affordable units is curtailed by restrictive zoning, opposition to increased density, and/or an unwillingness to approve more multifamily rental development. Homeownership - the traditional route to middle class wealth building - is impossible for all but the highest of income earners.

The acuity and relative universality of the current crisis notwithstanding, it is important to underscore that, for certain demographics, housing has always been a crisis. Displacement from land and exclusion from housing ownership and access has been and continues to be a multi-generational, lived experience in many American communities. This is no accident. Even a cursory look at public policy decisions in the United States over the past 200 years reveals that deeply entrenched racism - particularly with respect to African Americans - has profoundly shaped and continues to shape our current system of land and home ownership, access, and valuation. This ongoing injustice contributes to, among other things, the racial wealth gap, which further drives socioeconomic inequality along racial lines. It has also enabled elite and corporate interests to obtain ownership of vital assets in the very communities that have suffered from a history of disinvestment, neglect, and public abandonment—often in the name of renewal and revitalization. The result has been the perpetuation of the wealth and ownership disparities that are seen across race and class.

As such, housing policy must be (re)designed to forcefully confront a number of interrelated problems: commodification, racism, and climate change. Public housing must be revived and massively expanded - this time thoroughly green and mixed-income. Moreover, we cannot bridge the racial wealth gap and put a decisive end to de facto segregation without policies that specifically address decades (if not centuries) of institutional racism in housing markets. In addition, housing policy must address issues of sustainability. Older housing and developments must be retrofitted for energy efficiency and be powered by renewable energy and battery storage. New housing and development must utilize sustainable construction methods, be structured around mass transit and non-car-based forms of transportation. Communities currently located in places susceptible to now unavoidable climate change-induced events must receive assistance in relocating. Tenants must be given increased protections and organizing opportunities. Lastly, housing policy must prioritize housing models and policies that promote democratic and community control of land and housing. We must foster the creation of and provide

funding for community land trusts, limited-equity housing cooperatives, and resident-owned communities.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on:

1. The Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

- a. Pass legislation that addresses various aspects of the affordable housing and homelessness crisis, such as strengthening tenants' rights and tying highway funding to equitable development, improving and significantly expanding public housing and affordable apartments built with the national Housing Trust Fund (HTF) while preventing displacement, providing significantly increased funding for the HTF, strengthening public housing resident councils, providing new grants to create community land trusts and land banks in disinvested communities, combating homelessness by increasing funding for services, creating a monthly tax credit for renters and first-time homebuyers, and fighting real estate speculation; and
- b. Pass legislation which would invest up to \$180 billion over ten years in sustainable retrofits that include all needed repairs, vastly improved health, safety and comfort, and eliminate carbon emissions in our federal public housing.

2. The Virginia Governor and Democratic General Assembly members to:

- a. Enact legislation to protect consumers from rent-gouging and price-fixing;
- b. Revive public housing by ending the current prohibition on local governments owning and operating rental property and committing funding for the construction of green, energy efficient, mixed-income social housing on public land along public transit corridors (based on the public housing programs in Austria, Finland, and Sweden);
- c. Enact legislation for a Virginia tenants bill of rights;
- d. Prioritize public grants, loans, and subsidies for tenant unions seeking to convert their building or park to permanently affordable shared/limited-equity housing cooperatives;
- e. Foster and encourage the creation of local and regional community land trusts by dedicating a percentage of the state housing trust fund's resources for permanently affordable housing models like community land trusts and limited equity cooperatives; and
- f. Conduct a formal study on the history and consequences of housing discrimination in Virginia and assess how to make reparations to demographics and communities that were disproportionately affected.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Supports Expanding Public Banking in the United States**

### **Whereas,**

In the United States today, states and localities in need of financial services are all at the mercy of a cartel of Wall Street Banks that are able to impose high fees and foist pernicious financial products on them. Relatedly, communities concerned about the ethics of big banks' practices and investments find they have nowhere else to turn when pushing their local and state governments to divest from such institutions. Moreover, small to medium sized businesses and start-ups can have considerable difficulty gaining access to credit - particularly in times of bank shocks and credit crunches, while some communities suffer from banking deserts. Owners of recreational and medical marijuana growing and retail operations in states where they have been legalized have no place to put their cash. States and localities are highly dependent on the bond market for infrastructure funds, which leaves them vulnerable to predatory financing. Lastly, during the current crisis, we have seen that large Wall Street banks have been averse to helping small to medium size businesses under the Paycheck Protection Program.

There is a potential solution to these myriad, yet interconnected problems: public banks. A public bank is a chartered bank, owned by a government unit—a state, county, city, territory, tribe, or nation, serving as a depository for public funds, and mandated to serve a public mission reflecting the values and needs of the public it represents. In existing and proposed US public bank models, skilled bankers, not politicians, make bank decisions and provide accountability and transparency for how public funds are used. Any governmental body which can meet local banking requirements may, theoretically, create such a financial institution. Public banks can fund public projects at reduced cost, generate profits for the local government, and create low-cost credit for the local community.

While the federal government and localities operate hundreds (if not thousands) of funds, programs, and authorities that perform quasi-banking functions (such as making loans and es investments), the United States is one of the only countries in the OECD that does not have a formal public banking system of one form or another.[8] Nevertheless, the country as a whole has some experience with public banking entities. The United States Postal Service offered retail banking services in rural areas until the 1960s. At the state level, North Dakota has a hundred year old public bank – the Bank of North Dakota (BND) – which has been tremendously successful in creating and maintaining a stable, diverse banking ecosystem in that state and has returned hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue to public coffers. In light of the BND's successes, states and cities around the country have begun to explore the creation of a public bank, and California recently passed legislation to make it easier for cities and localities to create their own public bank. Abroad, we have seen how other countries are using existing public banking networks to provide financial support during the COVID-19 crisis. Indeed, if we had such a network here in the U.S., it may have been easier to get checks to families and loans and grants to small and medium sized businesses (and hence protect and preserve their payrolls, hence millions of jobs).

### **Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention calls on:**

1. The Virginia Congressional Delegation to:
  - a. Enact legislation to make it easier for states and localities to form public banks and imposes social and environmental responsibility requirements for their license;

- b. Enact legislation requiring the government to take an ownership stake with full voting rights in any financial institution that has to be bailed out or rescued during the COVID-19 epidemic or due to its own fraudulent or speculative activities; and
  - c. Enact legislation to create a Green Investment Bank to finance the development and mass deployment of the technology needed to make a full transition to an all-electric economy powered by renewables; and
  - d. Enact legislation to update the Community Reinvestment Act so as to foster a new system of community investment that focuses democratizing the ownership and control of assets at the community level.
2. The Virginia Governor and General Assembly to:
- a. Enact legislation to create a public bank for Virginia modeled on the Bank of North Dakota;
  - b. Enact legislation authorizing and simplifying the process for the creation of public banks by local governments in Virginia – similar to the law recently passed in California;
  - c. Enact legislation to authorize localities to form “green banks” that provide low-to-no interest loans to help low-income residents retrofit their homes with solar power or energy-efficiency upgrades;
  - d. Enact legislation authorizing credit unions to be qualified public depositories;
  - e. Conduct a study to determine the feasibility of establishing a special “pot bank” to hold the revenues earned from the sale of recreational and medical marijuana in the event that this is legalized in the future;
  - f. Encourage local governments to establish “bank on” programs to decrease the number of unbanked and underbanked residents in their communities;
  - g. Enact legislation that authorizes treasurers to adopt environmental and social responsibility criteria for use in the Request for Proposal process in selecting a public depository and for local governments to adopt a responsible community banking ordinance modeled on the National Community Reinvestment Coalition’s model local responsible banking ordinance; and
  - h. Enact legislation to authorize treasurers to create employee-ownership “linked-deposit programs” to help finance the creation of worker-owned businesses or the conversion of existing businesses to employee ownership.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Endorses Fair Banking, Wall Street Reform, and Public Banking**

**Whereas,**

The United States is in need of major financial reforms. Despite reforms enacted in the wake of the 2008/09 financial crisis, the big Wall Street financial institutions are bigger than ever and continue to routinely engage in illegal or unethical behavior. These institutions invest in and provide financial services to a variety of environmentally and socially destructive industries and infrastructure, particularly the fossil fuel industry – despite the threat of climate change. Credit card and payday loan usury is at an all-time high. ATM and overdraft fees drain billions of dollars from the working class and people of color. Tens of millions of Americans are either unbanked or underbanked, and banking deserts are increasingly prevalent in many communities. People of color, in particular, continue to face discrimination in lending in everything from mortgages to credit cards to auto loans. Local and state governments in need of financial services are at the mercy of a small cartel of Wall Street banks that charge exorbitant fees and foist harmful financial products on them. The market and political power of large corporate banks and new regulations that favor these big banks have led local and family-owned commercial banks to close or sell out to larger competitors. Commercial and consumer debt is now greater than it was before the financial crash in 2007-8. The long-term trend of the financialization of the U.S. economy has continued unabated while the country remains starved for major infrastructure investments. Private equity firms are buying up productive companies only to bleed them dry and walk away rich. Lastly, the federal government’s attempts to get emergency financial assistance to families and businesses to help them stave off financial ruin have been badly hampered by the resistance and opportunism of the big Wall Street banks that dominate our financial system.

It is abundantly clear that the U.S. financial system is in need of sweeping reforms and antitrust actions. Congress must break up the big banks, pass a modern Glass-Steagall act, update the Community Reinvestment Act, crack down on private equity looting, and reign in usurious lending practices and extortionate fees. Reforms, however, are not enough. Given how vital finance is for the health and proper functioning of the economy, we must make structural changes that put finance in service of the people and the economy and not vice versa. This means that we must stop relying on profit-driven investor-owned megabanks that are accountable only to their absentee shareholders. Instead we must forge a new financial system where democratically governed public, cooperative, and community-owned banks form its very foundation.

Congress must stabilize and democratize our financial system by expanding the role of public banking. First and foremost, this means authorizing the United States Postal Service to offer retail banking services at all local post offices. Secondly, Congress must establish a national infrastructure and a green investment bank to finance the repair of our crumbling infrastructure and our transition to an economy based on distributed renewable energy, storage, and energy efficiency. Thirdly, Congress must enact legislation making it easier for localities and states to establish public banks modeled on North Dakota’s hundred-year-old public bank, the Bank of North Dakota, which has been tremendously successful in creating and maintaining a stable, diverse banking ecosystem in that state. Lastly, given the potential for another major financial crisis resulting from the pandemic-induced shutdown, failed banks must be converted to permanent public ownership and provided with a mandate to finance a post-COVID-19 green stimulus.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Congressional Delegation to introduce and support legislation that addresses the above issues.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Endorses Government Leadership of a Partnership Economy to Create Opportunity for All**

**Whereas,**

The future belongs to those who invest in it. Since Reagan, under the banner of ‘small government,’ Republican administrations have disinvested, cutting non-defense spending, taxes on the rich, and regulations. In contrast, Democratic administrations have increased public investments, taxes on the rich to fund those investments, and legal protections of the public and markets. The impact over the long term, 1981-2017:

- Under Republicans, real median incomes stagnated almost completely, rising only 3% in 20 years; under Democrats, in contrast, real median incomes increased by 23% over 16 years;
- Under Republicans, the poor were also hurt badly, with poverty rates rising an average 2.5% per year; under Democrats, in contrast, poverty was successfully reduced an average 1.6% per year.

Republicans have, nevertheless, succeeded in persuading most voters that their ‘small government’ philosophy would give them a better economic future. The cause of this paradoxical success has been the Democrats’ neglect of the long-term benefits of their policies. With Democrats lacking a rival philosophy and story of future success, the Republican ‘small government’ vision has won by default. Democrats can win, if they identify the causes behind their long-term economic success and unite behind those principles as a rival Democratic vision. They can then tell a reality-based story of future prosperity for all Americans, based on policies consistent with this vision, and discredit the fraudulent Republican claims for the economic wonders of small government.

Since 2008, a series of excellent economic histories have identified the principles behind successful national efforts to create and sustain prosperity for all—the basis for a new Democratic vision. To lead successfully, governments must: (1) make major, sustained investments in people, infrastructure, and ideas, (2) fund those investments with adequate, progressive taxation, and (3) protect the public and markets with sound regulations. The private sector must operate within the law, gain income and profit, and then pay the taxes that sustain the workforce development, infrastructure, and new ideas. The philosophy that actually works: strong government leadership, alongside a strong private sector, each fulfilling its distinctive, essential role—a Partnership Economy.

The government investments that are proven to succeed in the long run are in public capital—human, physical, and intellectual. Investments in human capital include massive investments in education and health care. A highly educated and healthy workforce is far more productive. Investments in physical capital, in infrastructure (such as transportation, communication, and the environment) enable markets to function and expand. Investments in intellectual capital, in research and development, result in innovations enabling the creation of new products and services. The private sector has neither the incentives nor the capacity to fund such public goods and services. And the nation benefits enormously from an educated workforce, excellent infrastructure, new technology, and addressing climate change.

For public investments to be effective in growing the economy equitably, government must also fund them with progressive taxation, and back them with strong legal protections. Laws are needed to protect consumers, labor, small businesses, and the environment, and to prevent monopolies and oligopolies. Otherwise, unscrupulous predators win out in the marketplace by looting the public and government, eventually concentrating extreme wealth and power in only a few hands—which has actually happened today. More progressive taxation enables funds that are now put in the pockets of the rich, instead to be invested to help middle-income earners and the poor, both increasing equity and economic demand, helping the whole economy thrive.

The added needs for recovery from the pandemic require even greater support of Democratic policies for public investment, fulfilling the vision of a Partnership Economy.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** urges our Democratic elected officials and party leaders to:

1. Unite on this message: *Only government leadership of a Partnership Economy, through greatly increased investments in Americans and America, can secure opportunity for all;*
2. Greatly increase investments in education, health care, the environment, infrastructure for transportation and communication, and research and development;
3. Increase taxes on the extremely wealthy to help fund the increased investments, including taxes on assets of the wealthy, on financial transactions, and increased taxes on capital gains; and
4. Reverse all of President Trump’s unjustified cuts in legal protections for consumers, labor, small business, and the environment, and initiate renewed, vigorous enforcement of anti-trust laws.



**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Endorses Imposing a Wealth Tax and Restoring Progressive Taxation**

**Whereas,**

There is enormous inequality between the income and wealth of the wealthiest 1 percent and all other Americans. Most of the wealth of the wealthiest 1 percent comes from their ownership of stocks, bonds, and other kinds of stocks, bonds, and real property. On the other hand, most of the income for the 99 percent of Americans is from wages and salaries. The wealthiest 1 percent own 40 percent of all wealth in America. The lower half on the income distribution ladder in America has only 2 percent of all the wealth. The percentage of all income received by the middle class has slowly been shrinking. This is a long-term trend that has seemed virtually impossible to interrupt. Despite a number of national and global events with major economic consequences, upper-income families were the only income tier able to build on their wealth from 2001 to 2016, adding 33% at the median. Even now during the COVID-19 crisis, as 26 million Americans lose their jobs, the billionaire class has added \$308bn to its wealth.

In his bestselling and widely acclaimed book *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, French economist Thomas Piketty demonstrated with an impressive arsenal of data that in an economy where the rate of return on capital outstrips the rate of growth, inherited wealth will always grow faster than earned wealth. If there is slow growth alongside better financial returns, then inherited wealth will, on average, "dominate wealth amassed from a lifetime's labor by a wide margin", and wealth will concentrate among the lucky few at levels incompatible with democracy, let alone social justice. Capitalism, in short, automatically creates levels of inequality that are unsustainable. The current level of wealth concentration in the United States is not only an issue of moral import, but a serious threat to democratic governance.

The 2017 Tax Act dealt a near fatal blow to a progressive taxation system that has been under assault for several decades. At a bare minimum, the U.S. Congress must restore our taxation system to something resembling the Eisenhower-era policy regime. Given the current level of wealth inequality, however, we must go further. The U.S. Congress must impose a tax on extreme wealth.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

1. Impose a tax on extreme wealth with a progressive rate structure that would only apply to the wealthiest 180,000 households in America who are in the top 0.1 percent;
2. Enact legislation to 1) create a national wealth registry, 2) increase IRS funding for enforcement and require the IRS to perform an audit of 30 percent of wealth tax returns for those in the 1 percent bracket and a 100 percent audit rate for all billionaires, 3) impose a 40 percent exit tax on the net value of all assets under \$1 billion and 60 percent over \$1 billion for all wealthy individuals seeking to expatriate to avoid the tax, and 4) make enhancements to the international tax enforcement and anti-money laundering regime including the strengthening of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act; and
3. Restore a progressive tax regime by increasing the top marginal tax rate to at least 70 percent or higher, constructing fairer income rates and brackets, assessing a surtax on annual income of the rich, taxing capital income using a mark-to-market approach, taxing all income equally, taxing wealth like work, repealing the 20% deduction for certain business income, expanding the EITC to all working adults, closing wealth loopholes to strengthen Medicare, setting the social security payroll tax cap to capture 90% of earnings, closing the business payroll tax loophole, restoring responsible corporate tax rates, ending the "territorial" tax system that allows offshoring of corporate income, closing corporate tax loopholes, and taxing inherited wealth fairly and closing estate tax loopholes.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Rebuilding, Reinvesting, and Renewing America's Infrastructure**

**Whereas,**

Americans depend on our nation's roads, bridges, schools, telecommunication systems, water infrastructure, and electrical grids every single day. Our infrastructure was once the envy of the world, but due to lack of funding and investments, it has fallen apart and we have fallen behind. Today, the United States (US) has a current letter grade of a D+ granted by experts in their respective fields and ranks 13th in the world for overall infrastructure according to the World Economic Forum.

We drive on crumbling roads, bridges, and tunnels to commute to work and to get our children to school, many of which are in buildings that are unsafe and outdated. Many experts had said the collapsing of the Interstate 35W bridge in Minnesota would serve as a wakeup call, but over a decade later, the US has made little to no attempt to get ahead of this growing problem. We have seen a rise in train derailments across the United States, including in neighboring West Virginia where a train fell into the Potomac River near Harpers Ferry. Around half of the roads in many of our largest metropolitan areas are in poor conditions and littered with potholes.

Outside of physical safety, we still have a large population of Americans who do not have access to essential utilities. Currently, 19 million Americans do not have access to high speed internet either because of the cost or because of the lack of connection to their areas in rural parts of our country. 1.9 million people in the US do not have access to clean drinking water, a statistic that is disproportionately affecting communities of color and rural areas more than others, like Flint, Michigan which had been without clean drinking water for 5 years and is still recovering from the effects.

While we are falling behind in maintaining what we have, we are also not making improvements. We desperately need to invest in expanding our renewable energy portfolio in terms of wind energy, solar energy, hydro-electric, and other sustainable methods. During the current administration, we have seen tremendous regression as the US continues to attempt to prop up a dying coal and fossil fuel industry, while rolling back renewable production tax credits (PTCs) and the gutting of the Clean Power Plan. All the while, our workforce is being placed further into poverty and our unions are being strong-armed by employers and undercut by competitors in government sponsored projects leading to lower quality in finalized products, which in turn cost taxpayers more money. We need a new commitment to our public health and safety, our workforce, to our economy, and to our country.

According to a plan written by the Senate Democrats in partnership with the Society of Civil Engineers and other experts, these investments will total to about \$1 trillion dollars and create 15 million new jobs over the next 10 years: \$100 billion to the roads and bridges, \$100 billion to main streets, \$100 billion to highways and transportation, \$110 billion to water and sewer systems, \$50 billion to railroads and bus systems, \$130 billion to public transportation systems, \$200 billion to a new Vital Infrastructure Program (VIP), \$75 billion to America's schools without raising property taxes, \$30 billions to airports, \$10 billion to ports and waterways, \$25 billion to protect against natural disasters, \$100 billion to build new renewable energy infrastructure, \$20 billion to expand high speed internet and broadband access, \$20 billion to public lands and Indigenous country, \$10 billion to the Department of Veterans Affairs, and \$10 billion to new innovative financing tools.

The United States should be leading the world in infrastructure with the amount of money and access to new developing technologies that we have. It is time for America to reinvest, rebuild, and renew our infrastructure for the health, safety, and well-being of all Americans.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

1. Invest in transportation systems that increase safety, lower costs commuters and businesses, and get goods to market quicker, by stabilizing the Highway Trust Fund and providing a major increase in federal investment to upgrade the 56,000 structurally deficient bridges across the country, improve road quality and improve access to reliable transit option that are energy efficient and environmentally conscious;

2. Pursue technologies to recycle our waste glass into creating asphalt for highways and roads in a more effective manner as laid out by the Federal Highway Administration to reduce our created waste and create a more efficient method of road construction;
3. Invest in stronger, more resilient transportation networks and public infrastructure to withstand rising sea levels, a changing climate, extreme weather and predicted seismic events, and adopting cost-effective, nature-based solutions;
4. Improve our nation's inter-city passenger railroads and invest in high-speed rail to connect more communities and implement lifesaving Positive Train Control technology, while reducing service disruptions across the country and making it more convenient and safer for all passengers with funding for grant programs including: Amtrak, the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement program, the Federal-State Partnership program, and Restoration and Enhancement grants;
5. Invest in critical physical and digital infrastructure needs in schools while creating jobs in order to build safe, healthy, and modern learning environments for our students by reauthorizing the Qualified Zone Academy Bonds program and expand its use to help public schools located in economically distressed and high-poverty communities invest in their school districts;
6. Increase public investment in our airports and aviation system to meet passenger growth and cargo activity, while improving safety and efficiency by increasing appropriations to the FAA's annual facilities and equipment budget, the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), and additional investments to accelerate implementation of the NextGen modernization program;
7. Invest in marine dredging and inland waterways to accommodate growth in waterborne traffic and ensure that money paid by shippers into the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund is used to update our ports, inland waterways, locks, and dams with increasing funding available to the Army Corps Construction, Operations & Maintenance, and Investigations accounts, as well as projects supported by the Bureau of Reclamation;
8. Restore our commitment to addressing our drinking and wastewater infrastructure so that all Americans in urban and rural areas have access to safe and clean water, in order to protect public health for all communities, especially the most vulnerable populations, communities of color, and low income areas, and to ensure these essential public services remain affordable to working people by increasing funding for the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Program that provides federal loans to support large-scale water infrastructure projects with national and regional significance;
9. Deliver cheaper energy prices for consumers and reduce the number of power failures by improving and modernizing our energy grid, and expand renewable energy infrastructure to create sustainable jobs and lessen our carbon footprint, while strengthening our bioenergy capabilities and invest in energy efficiency retrofits and smart communities that help cut energy usage and combat climate change. Funding will be exhibited through incentives given for electricity generation, transportation fuels, and energy efficiency improvements based on performance: the cleaner the technology or the more energy conserved, the larger the incentive;
10. Expanding our connectivity through high speed internet and broadband access to rural communities and lower income communities, while stressing the importance of municipal owned telecommunication services;
11. Commit to undergrounding transmission lines for electric and telecommunication wherever possible in residential and commercial areas to reduce the likelihood of power outages and communication outages;
12. Build up the American infrastructure while maintaining critical protections for clean air, water, and wildlife;
13. Restore and maintain the integrity of America's waterways, restore contaminated land and protect the health of our communities, economy, environment, and natural resources;
14. Commit to using organized labor, Project Labor Agreements, and invest in Unions in all construction, maintenance, manufacturing, and other aspects of these projects. Place workers' interests and protections first in planning;
15. Modernize the Department of Veterans Affairs Hospitals, Extended Care Facilities, and other infrastructure critical to our nation's heroes;
16. Repurpose budget in Congress to account for the cost of all of these investments and rebuilding of necessary aspects of our country; and
17. Champion legislation that falls under the House Democrats' proposal for a *Better Deal to Rebuild America* and the Senate Democrats' proposal for *A Blueprint to Rebuild America's Infrastructure*.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Endorses A 21<sup>st</sup> Century National Infrastructure Bank**

**Whereas,**

Modernization and repair of our nation's infrastructure is a key to restoring our economic growth that has remained largely stagnant for the last decade. In fact, Infrastructure spending has fallen to 2.5 percent of our GDP, the lowest level in 70 years. That is one-half the comparable level in Europe and one-third of China's level. Recoveries from the Great Recession and political gridlock have kept us from addressing basic infrastructure needs. In order to grow our economy beyond the 1.8 percent average of the past decade, we need to invest in public infrastructure that will enhance economic efficiency, attract investment, and provide a means to address historic levels of income inequality. In addition, US citizens will have much-needed safer and more efficient transportation, communications, water and energy systems.

Over our nation's 240-year history, investment in infrastructure has accelerated when a national infrastructure bank (NIB) has been in place. There have been four such banks, the last of which was Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC, 1932-1957). From coast to coast, these banks financed the construction of roads, bridges, canals, the Trans Continental Railroads, schools, affordable housing, rural cooperatives, and other "internal Improvements"; lifted us out of the Great Depression; and helped us to win WWII. Similarly, infrastructure investment fell when the charters for those four banks were permitted by Congress to lapse.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) reported in 2017 that we need \$4.6 trillion just to repair the nation's infrastructure – roads and bridges, the power grid, schools, dams and levees, water and wastewater facilities, airports and rail, and public parks and recreation – of which at least \$2.1 trillion is not funded. In addition, new investments in high-speed rail, affordable housing, complete broadband, and electricity grid overlays, would reduce CO2 emissions from traffic congestion, the number one polluter. Financing of at least \$4 trillion is needed to properly develop these projects, which is not available from Federal or State Budgets. In Virginia's case, infrastructure spending has fallen to 1.7 percent of GDP, well below the already-low national average of 2.5 percent of GDP. There is a backlog in all spending areas, especially in solving traffic congestion problems and providing public transit.

The COVID-19 shutdown and resulting recession have left tens of millions of people unemployed who can benefit from new infrastructure-related jobs. Due to the pandemic, the U.S. lost 20.5 million jobs in April 2020, the steepest recorded surge in American unemployment ever recorded, wiping out a decade of job gains. The unemployment rate spiked to 14.7 percent, up from 4.4 percent in March, as thousands of businesses closed and laid off, or furloughed, workers they could no longer afford to employ. Although Congress passed several stimulus packages to combat the recession, extending unemployment benefits and providing small business loans and larger corporate bailouts, those responses will not be adequate to ensure a full recovery. An end-April Congressional Budget Office interim report forecasts that, even with the new measures, real GDP growth is expected to decline by -5.6 percent in 2020 and recover by only +2.8 percent in 2021. Meanwhile, unemployment is expected to average 11.4 percent in 2020, and remain at 10.1 in 2021, meaning millions will remain unemployed. A resulting fiscal deficit of \$3.7 trillion for fiscal year 2020 suggests that very little budget appropriations will be available to finance infrastructure investments any time soon.

A National Infrastructure Bank (NIB), modeled on the four previous banks in our nation's history, would create a government-owned bank that would lend up to \$4 trillion to state and local governments to repair and upgrade public infrastructure in every part of America. This Bank has significant advantages over all other proposals now under discussion to rebuild America's infrastructure and re-employ American workers affected by the COVID-19 recession, outlined as follows:

- **At \$4 trillion, Is Adequately Sized to Finance Projects In Every State:** It would yield less traffic congestion and CO2 pollution; lead-free water; new schools, affordable housing, mass transit, broadband everywhere; repair roads and bridges, electricity grids, provide new rail including High Speed; and more.
- **Operations:** Is capitalized with existing, privately owned U.S. Treasury Bonds, exchanged for preferred stock

paying an extra 2%; creates working cash to fund loans just like commercial banks; provides low interest loans, and maintains public management of infrastructure, both lowering total project costs.

- **Workers:** Creates 25 million new jobs, paying Davis-Bacon wages; re-hires from among the 33 million Americans now unemployed; provides training in permanent, new, construction and related occupations; reduces income inequality; and stimulates union membership.
- **Businesses:** Creates more business from all the new construction; the economy is more productive; trucks move faster; and there is increased consumer demand for products and services that businesses provide.
- **Economy:** Ramps up jobs and production coming out of the pandemic collapse; pushes up long-term growth from 1.8%/year, to 5%/year (based on past performance and recent computer modeling).
- **Federal Budget: Creates no new Federal Debt; requires no new Taxes;** is not dependent on Pay-As-You-Go financing from budgets; no other infrastructure or jobs proposal is budget neutral like this one.
- **State and Local Finances:** New jobs and economic recovery/growth improve local finances much faster compared to the 2008 Recession. Only a large NIB is capable of rebuilding American infrastructure, creating millions of long-lasting jobs, and lifting us out of this deep recession. Seventeen state legislatures, including Virginia, the National Association of Counties, National Association of Minority Contractors, and other organizations and labor unions across America have signaled their support for this NIB.

**Therefore, be it resolved; the Convention:**

1. Endorses a 21<sup>st</sup> Century National Infrastructure Bank along the lines outlined in this Resolution; and
2. Urges the Virginia Congressional Delegation to introduce a bill for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century National Infrastructure Bank during the 116<sup>th</sup> United States Congress and lead the effort to secure its passage.

**'The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Expanding Community Broadband and Ensuring Affordable, High-Speed Internet for All**

**Whereas,**

There is a serious digital divide in Virginia and the country as a whole. Hundreds of thousands of Virginian homes and businesses currently lack connection to fixed terrestrial broadband at speeds of 25 Mbps/3 Mbps (the FCC defined threshold for “high-speed internet”) because it is simply unprofitable for investor-owned internet service providers to build out their infrastructure to areas where population density is too low to recoup investments. Potentially many more Virginians who do have access to high-speed broadband are unable to afford it because of the monopoly prices charged by the handful of large providers who dominate the market. While the scope of the problem is difficult to assess due to inadequate reporting standards and resistance to data sharing by private wireline providers, the data that is available makes it clear that this digital divide manifests itself along geographic, class, and racial lines. This state of affairs has serious economic and social (justice) implications as the internet has become an essential component of modern life and business. Indeed, the current COVID-19 crisis has grimly highlighted the extent and consequences of this divide for rural areas, the poor, and people of color.

In addition to fostering a regulatory environment that serves to limit competition, the dominant investor-owned telecom companies have successfully lobbied the federal government and FCC to remove net neutrality rules, which allows them to establish tiered service and prioritize their own content over those of perceived or actual competitors. The major telecom companies have also convinced federal regulators to erode communications privacy protections, which allows them to harvest our browsing history for sale to third parties. Within the states, these same investor-owned giants have successfully lobbied state governments to pass laws preempting competition in the form of public broadband, or, as in Virginia’s case, have lobbied for onerous restrictions that make municipal broadband virtually impossible.

In stark contrast to the anti-competitive and anti-consumer behavior of the large investor-owned telecom companies, new models for providing fast and affordable telecommunications services have been springing up all over the country. Approximately 900 communities in the U.S. are being serviced by community owned broadband networks, of which more than 560 are served by some form of municipal network and more than 300 by a cooperative. Several of those networks are now considered to be the best and fastest in the country, if not the world. These networks have also pioneered innovative programs to bridge the digital divide to make sure all residents have access to broadband that is well above the FCC standard for high speed for a price that is a fraction of that charged by the large investor-owned telecoms — all while ensuring network neutrality and privacy protection. Virginia itself has a growing number of community networks in the form of 1) open-access networks owned and operated by a broadband authority, 2) fiber-to-the-home networks built by existing electric and telephone cooperatives, and 3) publicly owned dark fiber networks that connect publicly owned buildings – all of which have been shown to promote economic development and save taxpayer money.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention calls on;**

1. The Virginia Congressional Delegation to:
  - a. Enact legislation that clearly stipulates the right of municipalities, counties, and states to build their own broadband networks and preempts all local and state restrictions on the territorial and customer expansion of those community networks;
  - b. Create a multi-billion dollar fund that provides funds exclusively to electricity and telephone cooperatives, non-profit organizations, tribes, cities, counties, and other state subdivisions to build the fiber infrastructure necessary to bring high-speed broadband to unserved areas, underserved areas, or areas with minimal competition, while conditioning those grants on 1) strong labor, wage

and sourcing standards to ensure that federal funding goes toward creating good-paying union jobs and 2) on universal service, provisioning minimum speeds, privacy standards and affordability;

- c. Continue to seek passage of the “The Save the Internet Act” and apply pressure on the FCC to restore net neutrality and rescind rules that serve to erode internet user privacy;
- d. Enact legislation that will require ISPs to report service and speeds down to the household level, as well as aggregate pricing data, and make the data available to the public and stipulate regular audits to ensure accurate reporting;
- e. Enact legislation to prohibit monopoly-oriented actions by giant private providers to unfairly squeeze out competition, hold governments hostage, and drive up prices. Return control of utility poles and conduits to cities, prohibit landlords from making side deals with private ISPs to limit choices in their properties, and ban companies from limiting access to wires inside buildings; and
- f. Enact legislation that ensures that all new buildings are fiber-ready so that any network can deliver service there and institutes a “Dig Once” policy to require that conduit is laid anytime the ground is opened for a public infrastructure project.

2. The Governor of Virginia and the Virginia General Assembly to:

- a. Identify all laws within the Code of Virginia that currently pose an obstacle to any and all forms of community broadband and pass legislation to amend or eliminate them;
- b. Significantly increase state financial support and create a dedicated funding source for the Virginia Telecommunications Initiative program to provide infrastructure grants and technical assistance for localities in Virginia to build publicly owned and democratically controlled, co-operative, or open access broadband networks and to retrofit existing structures to accommodate Fiber-To-The-Home/Premises wireline connections;
- c. Enact legislation to prohibit the range of maneuvers giant private providers use to unfairly squeeze out competition, hold governments hostage, and drive up prices. Return control of utility poles and conduits to cities, prohibiting landlords from making side deals with private ISPs to limit choices in their properties, and banning companies from limiting access to wires inside buildings; and
- d. Enact legislation that ensures that all new buildings are fiber-ready so that any network can deliver service there and institute a “Dig Once” policy to require that conduit is laid anytime the ground is opened for a public infrastructure project.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Endorses Supporting Rural Communities**

### **Whereas,**

The past 40 years of federal economic policy have fostered growth without prosperity, concentrating nearly all of the increases in income and wealth among the top 20% of wage earners, located almost exclusively in coastal, urban areas.

Republican administrations have pushed anti-union, anti-worker, and pro-corporate policies, resulting in lower wages and poor working conditions and increasing economic insecurity in rural communities. Fossil fuel jobs have disappeared, big box stores and mega-banks have swallowed up independent retailers and small-town banks, and farmers have struggled through low prices, unpredictable markets, and increasingly challenging climate conditions.

As farmers, miners, loggers, drillers, and factory workers in rural areas have watched their economic prospects plummet due to workforce automation, unconstrained corporate influence, and globalization, they have heard calls for increased regulations on their industries and demands to shut down their plants without any concern for their livelihoods. Meanwhile, rural communities remain substantial providers of food, fiber, energy, and other essentials from which we all benefit.

Limiting the effects of climate change while promoting economic growth in rural communities and industries does not have to be a zero-sum proposition. Investments in infrastructure in these areas can boost rural economies, provide immediate jobs, and revitalize struggling industries. Financial incentives can be established that promote environmental stewardship and economic relief to rural communities. Some rural areas have already embraced energy-efficient farming, carbon sequestration, and farm-friendly wind and solar energy, and widespread deployment of these capabilities could begin to reverse the decline of many rural areas.

Education funding is heavily dependent on property taxes in the United States. This is a major factor in the inequality in education of rural populations, resulting in a vicious cycle of flight from rural areas to high-property-value suburbs with well-funded educational systems and a further decline of property values in rural areas. Alternative funding of education could reverse this cycle, improving both education and property values in rural areas.

Rural infrastructure improvements, particularly improved Internet access, are also critical. While there have been major improvements, due in part to the Obama recession recovery and ConnectALL initiatives, internet access in rural areas remains much more limited. The next major change in telecommunications is the fielding of 5G cellular service. Current plans for 5G are almost entirely aimed at high density areas, due to the shorter range of 5G signals in the primary currently allocated bandwidth. There are alternate bandwidths for 5G more suitable for rural use that will require government-provided incentives for both antenna fielding and telephones and computers that can respond to those bandwidths.

Democrats can build on their recent electoral successes in rural areas in 2020 and beyond by continuing to prioritize rural issues. Medicaid expansion has greatly improved access to healthcare for many rural communities, and the Democratic leaders who fought for it were rewarded with substantial election wins. States without Medicaid expansion have lost many



rural hospitals, and as rural populations everywhere have continued to decline, all rural healthcare facilities have been under pressure. Listening to rural constituents and understanding their needs for better financial and geographical access to healthcare led to an effective solution, Medicaid expansion, that has improved life in rural communities.

Actively participating in these communities and understanding their challenges and concerns will lead to more political success for Democrats and a rejuvenation of rural life in the United States.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Endorses building an ongoing and productive Democratic presence in rural communities, focused on engaging with community leaders and investing in community efforts, organizations, and local businesses that are effectively addressing problems and developing new opportunities;
2. Endorses fielding strong, locally recognized Democratic candidates for all contested offices – federal, state, and local -- particularly in rural areas;
3. Supports bringing farmers, loggers, fishermen, recreation workers, energy-sector workers, and rural innovators into what are now urban-dominated discussions about rural problems, strategies, policies and regulations;
4. Supports policies and strategies that reinvigorate antitrust legislation, especially within food, farm, seed and chemical industries, where corporate consolidation has devastated rural communities;
5. Supports farm and environmental policies and strategies that simultaneously strengthen rural livelihoods and economies, while better protecting the environment by focusing on investment in local food and farming infrastructure and policies providing financial incentives for farm, forest and fishery stewardship;
6. Supports climate change legislation that rewards farmer and forest landowners for practices that sequester carbon from the atmosphere into the soil;
7. Recommends a major initiative to rethink healthcare services in rural communities as part of universal healthcare, ensuring that rural facilities have the funding and capacity to perform time-critical, life-saving activities;
8. Prioritizes bread-and-butter economic issues and policies to assist rural economies, including substantial increases in support for local farms and businesses that choose to create energy-efficient buildings and farm-friendly wind and solar installations, and sustainable agriculture;
9. Supports expanding investment in rural broadband, including technological innovations that better serve low-density populations and mountainous terrain; and
10. Supports lessening the role of property taxes and broadening the funding base for education in rural communities.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Condemns the Failures of The Trump Administration and  
Our Current Healthcare System to Address the COVID-19 Pandemic and  
Endorses Major Policy Changes Including Establishing Universal Single-Payer Healthcare**

**Whereas,**

The current United States healthcare system ranks 37<sup>th</sup> in the world in healthcare access and quality and, by a large margin, first in the world in cost. The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the numerous shortcomings of our fragmented systems of health insurance; public health; drug and diagnostic testing development, approval, manufacture and distribution; and health information. These problems left us vulnerable and have exacerbated the disastrous effects of the pandemic.

Although healthcare access improved substantially with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), we remain the only major industrial country without universal access to healthcare. Due to the attacks on the ACA by the Trump administration and Republicans, even before the pandemic, access has been declining. The pandemic has surfaced a second threat to access – the dependence on employer-based health insurance for the majority of the population. Sudden unemployment is forcing tens of millions of Americans to lose their employer-based health insurance at exactly the time that they are likely to need it most. Furthermore, the millions of people without health insurance are among the most vulnerable to the pandemic.

The vast inequality of incomes and wealth in the US directly affects access and quality of care. Those with good health insurance can receive care comparable to that available anywhere in the world. Those without such insurance often go without care until they are forced to use medical care of last resort – hospital emergency rooms or community health clinics. This often leads to care provided too late to be effective, with disproportionate impact on the poor and communities of color. During the pandemic, it causes yet another burden on an overwhelmed system.

The pandemic has also exposed the very limited resilience of the American system. Unless a government mandates and funds a surge capacity, neither for-profit nor non-profit healthcare facilities will provide it. Our immediate surge capacity has been shown to be very limited. The failure to recognize and rapidly respond to the crisis has caused the caseload to exceed our ability to increase the capacity of our clinical care and public health systems. Even those tools that do exist to support a surge have been misused by the Trump administration. According to Fortune Magazine, “Trump spent the last 2 years slashing the government agencies responsible for handling the coronavirus outbreak,” including the National Security Council (NSC) Global Health Security Unit, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the State Department’s Complex Crises Fund, as well as cutting funding for the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and “reducing national healthcare spending by \$15 billion.” Most recently, Trump has withdrawn funding from the World Health Organization (WHO), in the middle of the world-wide pandemic, in an effort to cover up his own failure to respond effectively. The slow implementation of the Defense Production Act is likely to produce ventilators too late for the current wave of the pandemic. Failure to take charge of the acquisition and distribution of personal protective gear has led to price gouging and inefficient distribution. Using private firms to resell the limited gear acquired at the federal level is allowing a profit on public goods that should be distributed with government resources, including the US Postal Service and the Defense Logistics Agency.

In addition to poor access, poor quality of care for the less fortunate and lack of resilience, the cost of the US healthcare system is far higher – about double – than that of comparable countries. Much of this expense is due to extremely high administrative costs because of the complexity of our multi-payer system. This complexity not only results in high costs but directly affects care. Examples include delays in care caused by the need for prior approvals and limitations on reimbursements for telemedicine (voice and video replacing an in-person doctor’s visit), which is a key medical tool during the pandemic.

Although the direct “care” portion of our healthcare system has major deficiencies in access, quality and equity of care and cost, the pandemic has shown even greater deficiencies in the public health portion of the system – the part dedicated to prevention, rather than diagnosis and treatment. These deficiencies start with slow access to testing and the time between testing and getting the results. The first tools of epidemiology include identifying infected individuals, tracing their contacts and isolating both groups to prevent further spread of the pandemic. South Korea, Taiwan, and many other countries have adopted this approach and have largely contained the virus with a very low death rate. Unfortunately, these tools become less useful as the virus establishes itself in a population. At that point only “social distancing” can slow the spread until the best public health tool—a vaccine—and the best clinical tool—an effective treatment—are available.

Problems with prescription drugs in America are well known and include drugs being much more expensive than in other countries; frequent shortages, especially of intravenous formulations; drugs developed based on the profit potential of exclusive patents, not healthcare need, with many “copycat” drugs for the most profitable chronic conditions and few new antibiotics and antivirals; and the drug and vaccine approval process’ slow pace and expense. The pandemic has amplified these concerns and highlighted new problems in the related area of diagnostic testing. Test development is a haphazard, overly bureaucratic process. Even where tests exist, scaling up testing to the levels needed in a pandemic requires a coordinated effort, not

scattershot approaches. The existence of a good test is not sufficient. The whole process of testing, including distribution of tests and testing supplies and the availability of testers, must be part of the test implementation.

Due to our fragmented health system and serious missteps by the Trump administration, including mismanagement by the US Department of Health and Human Services of medical supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile, the US is experiencing a major disaster, with more deaths than any other country. Even states that responded relatively quickly, such as Washington, have death rates 35 times that of China, and 350 times that of Taiwan, as of May 2, 2020.

Finally, our current system fails to provide reliable information about either the pandemic as a whole or the course of treatments for individual patients. For the pandemic, states have no consistent approach to who is tested or how testing information is reported. While electronic health records are now widely available at both doctors' practices and hospitals as a result of The Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH) in the Obama administration, these records represent only the fragments of an individual's record associated with individual facilities. Such records have very little utility for public health or research purposes since they don't provide a complete picture of treatment or outcomes.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Endorses a universal single-payer healthcare system, such as Medicare-for-All that was endorsed by the 2016 Democratic Party of Virginia State Convention, with coverage for all to streamline the government's ability to organize a response to major healthcare events such as pandemics, and to break the link between unemployment and the loss of health care coverage;
2. Endorses the development of a national response framework to plan for and manage national-level crises, including reorganization of the components of the federal government that deal with public health, so that the response to crises such as the coronavirus are an integrated activity, including a logistics capability and a crisis coordination capability;
3. Recommends a funding increase for state public health activities to add staff for addressing other ongoing problems, such as the opioid crisis, and to cross-train such staff in contact tracing to provide a surge capability for pandemics;
4. Supports funding of a general surge capability for other elements of the healthcare system including hospital beds, personal protective equipment, specialized equipment such as ventilators, and medical personnel; and to increase training, including realistic exercises, and capability for existing medical reserve personnel;
5. Supports a congressionally mandated commission, as was established after Pearl Harbor, the Kennedy assassination and 9/11, to review our coronavirus pandemic response and determine what additional steps should be taken to improve our response to future pandemics;
6. Endorses changes in the policy incentives for developing prescription drugs and diagnostic tests that currently result in exorbitant costs and discourage development of vital new drugs such as antibiotics, antivirals, and vaccines;
7. Endorses legislation for permanent reimbursement of telehealth activities and cross-state accreditation of healthcare professionals to enable their quick deployment across state lines;
8. Endorses universal, secure, lifetime, patient-owned electronic health records designed to support clinical, research and public health purposes, including pandemics;
9. Urges the immediate resumption of ACA Health Insurance Marketplace open enrollment due to the pandemic;
10. Urges the re-establishment of those activities and organizational units of the NSC, CDC, USAID and other agencies that previously existed to manage global pandemics that were dismantled by the Trump administration and the Republicans, and supports an increase in their staffing, capacity and funding as well as the restoration of US funding to WHO;
11. Urges full implementation of the Defense Production Act to increase the supply of personal protective equipment , critical medical equipment, and other items necessary to combat the coronavirus now and to prepare for any resurgence;
12. Urges the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to prioritize maintenance, upkeep, and timely deployment of medical supplies from the Strategic National Stockpile, and supports the call by Reps. Don Beyer, Gerry Connolly, Abigail Spanberger, and others for the HHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to investigate the mismanagement of the stockpile during the pandemic;
13. Urges immediate government funding of all testing and treatment for coronavirus patients not covered by insurance;
14. Urges the direct distribution of government-acquired equipment for the pandemic, preventing private gain on public goods; and
15. Endorses *The Medicare Crisis Program Act*, proposed by Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) and 33 colleagues, that would require all public and private health insurers to fully cover care related to COVID-19—including for patients who display symptoms but test negative for the disease. Further, the legislation would bar healthcare providers from billing uninsured patients for COVID-19 care, expand Medicare and Medicaid eligibility, and cap out-of-pocket costs for Medicare enrollees.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Urges Legislators and State Attorneys General to Pass and Enforce Laws to  
Prevent Profiteering and Price Gouging During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Other Crises**

**Whereas,**

Evidence has emerged of legislators profiting through insider trading, businesses price-gouging consumers and states for medical supplies and other necessities, and the Trump administration using the distraction of the COVID-19 pandemic to inflict more harm on our government institutions.

On January 24, 2020, the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions received a private briefing on COVID-19. That day, Senator Kelly Loeffler (R-GA), a member of that committee, began selling large sums of equity investments in a selloff that continued through mid-February. Senator Loeffler also purchased stock in a company that produces teleworking software. Also, that day, Senator David Perdue (R-GA) purchased stock in a company that produces personal protective equipment (PPE). Two weeks later, on February 7, 2020, as news about the pandemic began to spread, Senator Richard Burr (R-NC) co-authored an op-ed to the public to assuage fears over the virus, asserting that “the United States is better prepared than ever before to face emerging public health threats, like the coronavirus.” However, just a week later, Senator Burr sold the most stock he’s sold in a single day in the previous 14 months. Senator Burr would continue to publicly downplay the severity of the pandemic while in a private event for donors on February 27, 2020, he issued a dire warning that “It is much more aggressive in its transmission than anything that we have seen in recent history.” Other members of Congress and their relatives also made substantial stock trades in the period between the January classified briefings and news of the severity of the pandemic becoming public in late February, indicating that these trades were made based on information these trusted elected officials were privy to that the general public could not access. Between February 21, 2020, and March 23, 2020, the Dow Jones Industrial Average, a benchmark for the performance of the US stock market, dropped more than 35%, representing a dramatic decline in people’s retirement funds, general investment portfolios, and in the overall economy. Through insider trading practices, the elected officials completing their stock trades before the decline put their own personal wealth above the physical safety and financial security of the public.

While members of Congress were using their advance knowledge of the pandemic to profit from the stock market, businesses began to take advantage of the increased demand for medical supplies, PPE, and general household goods. On March 30, 2020, the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) COVID-19 Hoarding and Price Gouging Task Force seized over half a million medical supplies from a private business that intended to sell the supplies at exorbitant prices. Earlier in March, a doctor in private practice reported that a company in New Jersey was selling surgical masks and gowns at a 700% markup and had hoarded “enough materials, including hand sanitizers, Clorox wipes, chemical cleaning supply agents, and surgical supplies, to outfit an entire hospital.” 3M Company, a key manufacturer of N95 respirator masks, released a price list that indicated a maximum suggested retail price of \$1.27 for its masks. However, some distributors and resellers of 3M products have been selling these masks for as much as \$7.00 each, a 550% increase. President Trump demanded that 3M hold its distributors accountable, because of his own unwillingness or inability to do so. State governments have also fallen victim to price gouging as they have been forced to bid against one another and the federal government to acquire ventilators. The increased demand combined with a major supply shortfall has increased unit prices from approximately \$25,000 to over \$40,000, a 60% price increase. Needing 30,000 ventilators, the state of New York spent an extra \$450 million of taxpayer funds. Currently, those caught hoarding and price gouging these necessary supplies during a national emergency are forced to forfeit those goods and are compensated at the market value before the pandemic began. With no criminal sanctions imposed, there is no deterrent effect on others who continue to take advantage of this crisis.

Even businesses that don’t take advantage of consumers through price gouging will profit from legislation, presumably intended to protect the American people and economy from the scourges of the pandemic, but heavily manipulated by the Trump administration and the Republican Senate to benefit corporations and the affluent. In the initial \$2.2 trillion bailout bill passed in late March, Congress provided excessive funds for special interests and corporate welfare and loosened regulations barely tangential to the economic crisis at hand. The bill provides for “forgivable loans” for small businesses that are forgiven if the employer retains a substantial percentage of its employees throughout the crisis. Employers with fewer than 500 employees--even large firms with fewer than 500 *per location*--much larger than the stereotypical small business, are eligible for these funds and many will be able to

keep the funds permanently. With market interest rates at or near zero, such employers already have access to cash through the lending system but will no doubt feast on free taxpayer money instead. Even more egregious is that even hotel chains such as Trump Hotels may fall into the bill's definition of a small business. Colleges and universities providing loans and financial aid through federal programs will not be required to refund those resources for students withdrawing as a result of the pandemic. This even applies to private for-profit colleges, which typically have higher withdrawal rates and will be able to use these federal funds to maintain their profit margins.

Retailers, particularly supermarkets, hotels, and restaurants, received a significant tax break for which they have lobbied for several years, long before the pandemic. The tax break allows these businesses to deduct the cost of certain capital improvements early, reducing their tax liability. The bailout bill provides this handout retrospectively, allowing these businesses to obtain a cash refund for taxes paid in 2018 and 2019, a corporate welfare benefit worth up to \$15 billion per year. Finally, the banking industry received a reduction in capital reserve requirements that protect consumers from runs on banks and limit banks' ability to profit on aggressive investing practices. While such a reduction could be reasonable during a recession, there are little restrictions placed on banks during the crisis and the banking industry is already lobbying to make this reduction permanent. Banks are receiving this relief while actively engaging industry to maximize profit from this pandemic. One banker asked the executives of Gilead Sciences, maker of a potential drug for COVID-19, "Are you able to raise the price on some of this [...] to be fairly consistent as far as your overall profit matrix?" and another banker inquired whether Gilead had "a commercial strategy" or could "create a business" out of the new drug.

With the public traumatized and distracted by the pandemic and the general disruption to normal life, and with watchdogs distracted by stories of insider trading, price gouging, and corporate bailouts, the Trump administration has quietly inflicted more damage on necessary federal regulations and on government infrastructure. On March 19, 2020, the Department of the Interior (DOI) sold over 14,000 leases to oil and gas companies for a total of approximately \$100 million, the lowest price received to date during Trump's presidency, allowing oil and gas companies to maintain high profit margins while other industries suffer. On March 26, 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provided guidance to businesses that it does not expect power plants, factories, and other companies to meet current environmental standards and reporting requirements and will not impose penalties for violations. This current guidance from the EPA is in effect indefinitely and will negate the minor improvements observed in the environment as a result of the response to the pandemic. While encouraging industry to further poison the environment, the administration has also pursued a severe violation of basic constitutional rights as the DOJ requested that Congress pass a law permitting law enforcement agencies to detain arrestees indefinitely if courts are closed or judges are unavailable (or unwilling) to preside over a hearing during the emergency. Such action would permit the government to retain arrestees in private prisons without a fair and speedy trial and without the right to provide a legal defense. It is perhaps the most egregious attempt of the administration to ignore the most basic principles of our democracy.

Trump's efforts to dismantle important government agencies and ignorance of the work of those agencies exacerbated the effects of this pandemic and endangered more lives. As Naomi Klein observed in her award-winning book "The Shock Doctrine," right-wing political and economic elites have often taken advantage of traumatic events such as wars, natural disasters, and pandemics to force through unpopular policies while the general population is preoccupied with the disaster at hand. Almost always, the measures inflicted during such crises benefit only the elites and impose austerity and suspend rights and liberties for everyone else. A competent, honest, and empathic administration could have mitigated, instead of exacerbated, much of the damage inflicted by COVID-19 on the US economy and on the American people.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention urges:**

1. The Justice Department and state attorneys general to:
  - a. Investigate all suspicious trading activity in the portfolios of legislators and their close contacts from the date of the first classified briefings through the date the severity of the pandemic was first made public; and
  - b. Investigate all possible instances of price gouging since the first state or national emergency declaration and prosecute all violators to the maximum extent under current law.
2. Congress and state legislatures to:

- a. Enhance and enforce current insider trading laws to prohibit government officials and their trustees from engaging in any trading activity related to classified matters until such matters are made public;
  - b. Enact laws prohibiting the stockpiling for resale and price gouging of necessities during a declared emergency, with fines and penalties adequate to deter future bad actors; and
  - c. Enact legislation to provide more oversight and control over the president's actions during a declared national emergency.
3. The 2020 Democratic National Convention Platform committee and Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden to pledge to restore financial, environmental and other protections the Trump administration removed using the specious justification of the pandemic.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Selected Medicines for a Public Pharma and  
Creating a Free Public Vaccine for COVID-19**

**Whereas,**

As the world shifts its focus from containment to a cure, it has become urgent to face up to the dangers of our reliance on pharmaceutical and biotech industries built to serve Wall Street and shareholder value over human needs and public health. The case for removing patent-barriers and expanding government control over drug research and development was already strong and gaining traction before the COVID-19 pandemic. The events of recent months have further exposed the faults of the current model and bolstered the case for alternatives. Rohit Malpani, the former policy director for the Médecins Sans Frontières Access Campaign who has advised Oxfam, recently underscored this reality, stating, “Under the patent-model that drives the behavior and priorities of the drug industry, companies have no reason to focus resources on a potential pandemic-level virus like Ebola and coronavirus, because the chances of it being used within the term of a patent is too low. It’s never been clearer that something has to change.”

The current consensus by scientists and public health experts is that the only way to end the coronavirus' devastating effects on America's citizens and its economy is to develop, produce at scale and widely distribute an effective vaccine against COVID-19 as quickly as possible. There are, of course, myriad scientific challenges inherent to that imperative, among them the virus' potential mutability, our lack of knowledge about whether antibodies provide protection against reinfection (and, if so, for how long), and the time it takes to discover an effective vaccine, test it, receive regulatory approval and begin commercial production. But there is one more problem we have rarely had to consider: By pharmaceutical companies' own estimates, no company has anywhere near the production capacity needed to meet the demand, once those effective vaccines have been found.

The number of vaccine producers has been dwindling for years, because vaccines do not offer the kinds of profits that pharmaceutical companies think they deserve. And, despite their very public proclamations of support for vaccine research at moments like these, companies often pull out of such efforts before a fully viable product can be produced because of a lack of market incentives. For instance, a number of companies reported losing money on Ebola or SARS vaccine development programs. In recent years, GSK made, then later abandoned, its commitments to Ebola vaccine development; Sanofi did much the same with Zika; and Novartis got rid of its whole vaccine development unit in 2014.

There is, then, but one viable solution: We should nationalize what remains of the American vaccine industry now, thereby assuring that any coronavirus vaccines produced can be made as widely available and as inexpensive soon as possible.

We should not stop with vaccines, however. We need equitable and affordable access to essential medicines (across therapeutic classes) for all; i.e. this means we need a public option in pharmaceuticals. Too many Americans are suffering and dying prematurely because we have ceded control over a key part of our infrastructure for public health—the pharmaceutical industry—to unaccountable corporations, for whom the pursuit of profit trumps the needs of patients and communities. Instead of continuing to push the boulder of regulation up the hill in hopes that it one day finally proves effective, we can displace corporate power over our health and lives by moving towards a

democratic, publicly-owned pharmaceutical sector, designed to respond to public health needs and deliver better health outcomes at lower costs.

Democratic, public ownership of pharmaceutical development, production, and distribution in the U.S. is necessary to combat the increasingly harmful impacts of Big Pharma which decades of regulation have failed to counteract. Developing a public pharmaceutical sector presents a systemic approach to these issues, superseding the need for piecemeal reform which could be rolled back in the future--nationalizing the vaccine industry could hasten the transition to such a system while securing a critical resource for national security and public health in the process. Such a new public pharmaceutical sector would be a resilient ecosystem, with publicly-owned companies across the supply chain set up at local, state, regional and national levels. Moreover, public pharmaceuticals would produce improved outcomes for our health, economy and democracy even in the absence of other interventions such as patent reform, anti-trust action, or changes to our health insurance system.

Public control of pharmaceutical manufacturing, wholesale distribution and retail pharmacies could serve as the basis for large-scale upstream investments in public health through the development of associated educational opportunities and job pipelines—part of an inclusive industrial strategy for economic development and stabilization, with profit now captured by corporations reinvested to meet public needs. Existing public resources like the Veterans Health Administration and the US Postal Service could be leveraged to help deliver medications, and public, unitary pricing on medications and their distribution would create transparency in the pharmaceutical supply chain that could inform further policy efforts.

Public ownership in pharmaceutical R&D would ensure that more intellectual property related to drug development would be held by public institutions and utilized in the public interest. Right now, a small number of newer medications are responsible for the majority of pharmaceutical spending by public programs like Medicare and Medicaid. Ensuring that new drug development is done in the public interest assures that not only do we get the medications that we need for the most pressing public health concerns (rather than the most profitable health issues), but also that those medications come at an accessible price.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

1. Pass a resolution affirming that once a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine is available, it must be treated as a global public good, made available universally through open licensing of any related intellectual property and full data transparency;
2. Enact legislation to authorize nationalizing selected vaccines including COVID-19 in the interest of national security and public health, assuring sufficient capacity for production and distribution of a coronavirus vaccine and other high priority vaccines;
3. Enact legislation that establishes a full cycle pharmaceutical R&D institute at the NIH based on the Medicine for All proposal of The Next System Project;
4. Cosponsor and pass the Affordable Drug Manufacturing Act introduced by Senator Warren and Representative Schakowsky on public manufacturing of medicines, medical technologies, and PPE; and
5. Express support for WHO COVID-19 technologies patent pool and urge US to sign-on.



**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention**  
**Supports Reforming Pharmaceuticals, Limiting Drug Prices, and Holding Big Pharma Accountable**

**Whereas,**

In the United States, the pharmaceutical industry has been one of the least regulated industries of all time. Big pharma has been charging Americans prices that are three, four, or even ten times higher than what they are priced in other countries. Bad actors have often taken advantage of the limited regulation on the pharmaceutical industry to increase profitability. Martin Shkreli, the former CEO of Turing Pharmaceuticals, obtained the manufacturing license for the antiparasitic drug Daraprim, which is used to prevent pneumonia in HIV/AIDS patients, from \$13.50 per tablet to \$750 per tablet in 2015 to increase profits. Purdue Pharmaceuticals, owned by the Sackler family and the main producer of Oxycontin, has pushed the addictive drug since 1995 through deceptive sales practices. Though the Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal filed lawsuits against the company in 2001, they have continued to falsely claim that the drug was “less addictive” than other drugs, helping spur the opioid epidemic in America.

Currently, there are two major prescription drug problems within the United States: the price of drugs and the limited regulation on the manufacturing and seeming drug peddling conducted by these companies.

Broken Drug Pricing

Americans spend more on prescription drugs than anyone else in the world, which averages to about \$1200 per person per year. In many cases, the highest priced drugs are the ones that are most needed for medical survival, the biggest example being insulin. Even though insulin was invented in 1922, its inflation-adjusted per-unit price has, at least, tripled between the 1990s and 2014. In the United States, insulin costs per patient have nearly doubled from 2012 to 2016. This dramatic increase in the price of insulin has put 7 million Americans with diabetes in danger, especially since it has led to insulin rationing. Insulin rationing due to the inability to afford the drug can lead to diabetic ketoacidosis, which will ultimately lead to death in most patients.

Delegate Lee Carter (D-Manassas) introduced HB-66 which prohibited health insurance companies and other carriers from setting an amount exceeding \$50 per 30-day supply that a covered person is required to pay at the point of sale in order to receive a covered prescription insulin drug. Though other bills have been introduced on the federal level for insulin and other prescription drugs, they have not been able to gain traction within Congress. However, these monthly caps can save lives and prevent fatal insulin-rationing.

Congressman Frank Pallone (D-NJ-6) introduced the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act (H.R. 3) in October of 2019, which passed through the House, and now awaits action in the Senate. The bill would give Medicare the power to negotiate directly with drug companies and would create strong new tools to force drug companies to the table to agree to real price reductions. HR 3 would stop drug companies from ripping off Americans while charging other countries less for the same drugs, by limiting the maximum price for any negotiated drug to the average price in other countries like ours, where drug companies charge less for the same drugs – and admit they still make a profit.

Deceptive Sales Methods and Pushing Unneeded Drugs

Currently in the United States, there is a growing opioid epidemic that has led to widespread addiction as well as thousands of overdoses. From 1999 to 2018, more than 750,000 Americans died from opioid-related drug overdoses. In 2018, an estimated 2 million people in the United States had a substance use disorder related to prescription opioid pain medication. A large portion of this epidemic is due to the pushing of prescription opioids, such as OxyContin.

Purdue Pharmaceuticals originally debuted the drug in 1996 and began pushing it to medical professionals as they wanted to see “a blizzard of prescriptions that will bury the competition.” For years, the pharmaceutical company marketed the drug as less addictive than competitors, claiming it “did not cause a ‘buzz’ or euphoria ... and could be used to ‘weed out’ addicts”, even after they had reported they had stopped “misstatements” in 2001. Oftentimes,

Purdue's pharma reps would incentivize doctors' offices by paying the doctors on an exponential scale for their increases in prescriptions.

This form of marketing by the drug company led to drug peddling by doctors, over prescribing of the pain medication for seemingly no justifiable medical reason. The vicious cycle of more money for more prescriptions led to the widespread opioid epidemic that the United States still finds itself in today. In 2018, Congress passed the Opioid Crisis Response Act (OCRA) (S. 2690), which contained a mix of law enforcement and public health measures, including one that aims to block deadly fentanyl from being imported through the mail and one that will allow more nurses to prescribe medication for opioid addiction. Though it was a step forward for the relief to many who suffer from addiction, the bill did not hold large drug companies, such as Purdue Pharma, to compensating the victims of the opioid epidemic, install regulations on the industry to prevent another addiction crisis from occurring, or bar companies that contributed to the crisis from profiting off the manufacturing of drugs that treat addiction.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Democratic Congressional Delegation to:

1. Limit the price of lifesaving prescription drugs for medical conditions, such as (but not limited to) Diabetes, Asthma, HIV/AIDs, Multiple Sclerosis, Hepatitis, and Cancer, by working to pass legislation through the House and the Senate to cap drug costs, similar to Del. Carter's HB 66;
2. Work to pass the Elijah E. Cummings Lower Drug Costs Now Act (H.R. 3) by calling on Sen. Mitch McConnell to assign the bill to a committee and to call for a vote on the Senate floor;
3. Call on the Food & Drug Administration to enforce regulations more heavily against pharmaceutical companies that use deceptive sales methods and/or pricing methods;
4. Continue to move forward with regulation on the methods in which pharmaceutical companies are allowed to market their products;
5. Ensuring those affected by the opioid epidemic are given compensation from companies, such as Purdue Pharmaceuticals, that spurred the spread of the addictive drug; and
6. Limit the ability of drug companies that contributed to the opioid crisis from profiting off of the manufacturing of drugs that treat addiction.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Urges an Immediate Residential Rent Freeze during COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Whereas,**

During the times of a Global Pandemic due to COVID-19, it is imperative that Virginians do not face the prospect of homelessness. In order to contain the spread of COVID-19, residents of the Commonwealth have been urged by Governor Northam to stay at home. We call on the Democratic Party to make efforts to ensure that residents are able to stay in their homes through the assistance of suspension of rents and mortgages while we ask many Virginians who have lost their jobs or reduced hours/incomes due to the community effects of COVID-19 with the requirement to adhere to social distancing.

The COVID-19 Federal Stimulus provided through CARES ACT of \$1200 doesn't cover an average monthly rent for a Studio Apartment in the following localities: Arlington County, Clarke County, Fairfax County, Fauquier County, Loudoun County, Prince William County, Spotsylvania County, Stafford County, and Cities of Alexandria, Fairfax, Falls Church, Fredericksburg, Manassas, and Manassas Park (Source: Rent Data).

The Average Median Rent in Virginia is \$1600, 4th most expensive state, which results in residents spending 20% of their total income on Rent, 10th highest in the nation. (Earnest) Other areas of Virginia where there are areas with lower rents still have less in their income to pay for groceries and other expenses due to lower wages such as Harrisonburg in which 39% of the population is deemed Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained and Employed. This means that this segment of the population do not have enough income or assistance to afford basic necessities.[cite United Way]. Rental costs are placing a heavy financial burden on families that impact ability to obtain basic needs such as groceries, nutrition and healthcare.

Contractual commitments that were placed in times before COVID-19 pandemic now threaten to have real disruptive impacts due to loss of income / wages and now those commitments must be frozen until income flows return to normal.

The District of Columbia has already passed similar legislation to assist their population (Source: DC Council).

Many people of the Commonwealth of Virginia require a relief from monthly costs to enable them to continue to have stable housing during a global pandemic.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention calls on:**

1. The Virginia Governor, House Speaker, Senate Majority Leader, and all members of the General Assembly to enact legislation that:
  - a. Suspends all Rent payments across the Commonwealth of Virginia for the duration of the crisis, including late fees, debts with no retaliation;
  - b. Suspends mortgage payment for the duration of the crisis;
  - c. Provides protections against utility shut-offs and expand such protections to include cable and telecommunications service;
  - d. Eliminates of property taxes for the duration of the epidemic;
  - e. Prohibits Debt-collection lawsuits and the seizures of cars and other property; and
  - f. Expands the definition of employment, for the purposes of collecting unemployment insurance to include self-employment, gig workers, those seeking part-time work and others "who otherwise would not qualify".
  
2. The Virginia Congressional Delegation to cosponsor H.R. 6515 - Rent and Mortgage Cancellation Act of 2020.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Ongoing Direct Cash Payments to All Citizens of the  
Commonwealth of Virginia During the Coronavirus Crisis**

**Whereas,**

The COVID-19 health crisis has led to massive levels of unemployment and lost income for hundreds of thousands of Virginians due to business restrictions expected to last until at least June. Many businesses are expected to modify their labor needs and increase the trends of automation to replace the need for workers that will lead to a slow rehiring of workers.

The lengthy rollout of one-time cash payments of up to \$1,200 and the 300,000+ unemployment insurance requests that are overwhelming the system, won't be sufficient for most Virginians to pay their bills for much longer.

The current federal remedies have led to many corporations receiving taxpayer-funded bailouts to remain viable while many small business owners and their employees have yet to get help.

Many Virginians have been left behind all together due to numerous loopholes in these programs while those deemed "essential" still must work in dangerous environments and also pay for additional childcare while schools remain closed.

A rapid increase in poverty is already leading to an increase in hate crimes, domestic abuse, social division, violence, and crime in general, as well as an increase in depression, drug abuse, suicide, and other health problems.

Many Democrats in Congress have proposed a cash payment program, and 82% of Americans support extending direct cash payments until COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, according to OnePoll.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** supports continuing direct cash payments to every Virginian adult and child from the Internal Revenue Service on a monthly basis until most business restrictions are lifted and all Americans are able to get back on their feet economically.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Urges Support for Economically Disadvantaged Workers during Pandemics**

**Whereas,**

As the spread of the Coronavirus Novel Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) expands across the country, closing businesses and schools, the economic disruptions were revealed in April's U.S. unemployment figures which exceeded 25 million individuals by the end of April, or more than 1 in 10 working-age Americans. This included more than 415,000 Virginians, or 9 percent of the workforce, who filed unemployment claims. While self-employed workers and independent contractors are typically excluded from traditional unemployment benefits, the recently passed CARES Act creates a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PAU) program that could make them eligible for \$600 in weekly benefits. However, more than weeks after the act's passing, the PUA program is still not implemented in Virginia.

As businesses shut down, delays in implementing the federal benefits system are straining low-income Virginia workers who were hoping for relief during the pandemic shutdown. Nearly a third of 13.4 million US renters didn't pay their rent between April 1 and April 5. As unemployment levels continue to rise and delays have been reported in getting assistance to residents, workers' ability to pay May's rent will be challenged. This raises the specter of evictions and utility shut offs. While Governor Northam proposes an eviction moratorium of an extra 60 days to catch up on payment to residents who can't pay their rent, continued economic turmoil is likely to lead to large scale debt to households during this time in Virginia and across the United States.

With millions out of work and no money coming available to households, families become more food insecure. Families should have to weigh paying their rent or buying food for their children. In this context the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is critical in staving off increased hunger and poverty during the crisis-and for supporting local economies and workers. While the CARES Act included increased funding for SNAP to cover the costs associated with the increase in caseload, it did not raise benefits for SNAP recipients.

The crisis also highlights that paid sick leave is crucial, with many workers fear dismissal or discrimination when sick. The absence of paid sick days forces ill workers to decide between caring for their deteriorating health or losing jobs and income, risking impoverishment to themselves and their families. Currently, 24% of U.S. civilian workers, or roughly 33.6 million people don't have paid sick leave.

As the pandemic evolves, we need to recognize that many of low-wage workers will not be able to return to the so-called "normal state of being" and that permanent legislation needs to be put in place which serves as a foundation for long-term resilience to future disasters.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** requests the Virginia governor and the Virginia Democratic congressional delegation to support:

1. \$100 billion in federal money for emergency rental assistance, along with a national moratorium on evictions during the crisis. The bipartisan Eviction Crisis Act (S.3030) introduced by Senator Bennet (D-DO) and Portman (R-OH) is a model that establishes a federal emergency housing grant program which would provide aid to people experiencing housing insecurity in order to prevent homelessness;
2. Strengthening SNAP in the next federal relief package by increasing the maximum benefit available to all households by 15 percent and increasing the minimum benefit from \$16 to \$30/person;
3. In the context of the crisis, the amount slated to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund (VHTF), currently \$84 million over three years, should be increased to create or preserve affordable housing units, reduce the cost of affordable housing, increase homeownership and provide rapid re-housing and longer-term housing solutions for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness;
4. Temporary federal sick leave benefits as part of emergency legislation to address the COVID-19 crisis. The measure would guarantee workers with the disease or caring for family members with two-thirds of their wages for up to three months; it would expire in January 2021. The bill also would require all private employers to give their workers seven days of paid sick leave, with an additional 14 days available immediately in the event of “public health emergencies;”
5. Support an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC) in the next coronavirus relief package. As the economic effects of COVID-19 are expected to last into next year, this would put money back in the pockets of working Americans as they continue to weather the economic downturn. This immediate support would build on an existing bill, Working Families Tax Relief Act; and
6. Over the longer term, a federally implemented refundable “renters tax credit” for low income renters would be a foundation for long-term resilience to future disasters. Households would receive a refundable tax credit for rental costs above 30 percent of their household income up to the local fair market rent.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Urges the Implementation of a State Emergency Production Law**

**Whereas,**

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep inadequacies in federal and state emergency management and preparedness. Lack of preparation, action, and coordination left states on their own to obtain and negotiate for personal protection equipment (PPE) and other necessities for individuals, healthcare and essential workers, and businesses. Immediately, less scrupulous suppliers stepped up to charge outrageous prices for life-saving equipment, while others seemingly tried to scam states in deals which fell through altogether.

The United States federal government as well as states, whether working individually or in concert, must develop the capacity to produce PPE, virus testing materials, and other emergency equipment without necessitating reliance on, international market, private entities, and/or federal action. The dependence on short-term profits by private corporations and elected leaders make these actors unreliable and untrustworthy when it comes to safety and emergency response.

Experience, most recently in the two long-term crises we face- pandemic and climate emergencies, has taught that anything short of self-reliance and aim for long-term sustainability by the state is irresponsible.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has particularly shown the need for an emergency production law by revealing our inability to provide widespread testing. Therefore, leading us and our leaders to not know the extent of the problem, impeding our government and leaders from being able to plan and fully respond to the crisis adequately and with confidence.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** urges the incoming Biden administration, as well as local, state, and federal government to enhance the self-sufficiency of the United States and Virginia in emergency situations by enacting and implementing a Virginia emergency production law to augment coordination between industry, business, healthcare, education, and other sectors in emergency circumstances. This law would only take effect in the event of significant disruptions to economy, health, and climate.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Recognizes Racism Experienced by Blacks and African Americans is a Public Health Crisis**

**Whereas,**

Race is a social construction with no biological basis. Racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism is internalized or interpersonal; and systemic racism is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on social interpretation of how one looks, that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources.

On December 18, 2019, the United Nations General Assembly issued a global call for concrete action for the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and the comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Durban Declaration and Program of Action.

The Presidency of Donald J. Trump has created an environment where people are more comfortable expressing racist views and opinions and acting on those racist views.

The COVID-19 pandemic is killing African Americans at greater rates than any other group in the United States. Out of the 17 total COVID-19 deaths reported in April 2020 in the Prince William Health District, eight, or about 47%, were African American even though African American residents make up only 22% of the total population of Prince William County, 15% of the population of the City of Manassas Park and 14% of the City of Manassas.

Empirical analyses have revealed the persistence of racial differences in health even after adjustment for socioeconomic status (SES). More than 100 studies from academia, research centers, the United Nations and the US Department of Health and Human Services have linked racism to worse health outcomes.

While there is no epidemiological definition of “crisis”, the health impact of racism clearly rises to the definition proposed by Galea: “The problem must affect large numbers of people, it must threaten health over the long-term, and it must require the adoption of large-scale solutions.”

Democrats in Virginia have led the nation to end discrimination in public accommodations, housing, education, and credit. Virginia has also led the nation to ensure local human rights and equality based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Calls on the incoming Biden administration as well as local, state, and federal governments to work to:
  - a. Continue the fight for economic fairness, against inequality and to ensure the health and safety of ALL Americans;
  - b. Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting Black and African Americans throughout the entire society; and
  - c. Advocate the reinstatement of disparate impact analysis in all government programs and policies to identify how public policy is impacting disparate experiences within Black and African American communities and for individuals. The programs include but are not limited to the following:
    - the disparate impact of Black and African American student discipline policies Virginia Public Schools is included,
    - the economic impact of Student debt on Black and African American debt is included, on mortgage and lending practices and their impact on Black and African American homebuyers,
    - excessive and deadly use of force by Virginia State and local police forces against unarmed Black and African American citizens,
    - Medical treatment to the COVID-19 Pandemic,



- Medical services and treatment throughout the commonwealth of Virginia,
- Medical services within the State's Prison population.

2. Commends the Virginia Governor for:

- a. Signing into law on March 5, 2020 an amendment to the Virginia Human Rights Act, Virginia Code Section 2.2-3901. While the Virginia Human Rights Act defines "because of sex or gender" or "on the basis of sex or gender," Section 2.2-3901 failed to define or elaborate on the meaning of "the basis of race"; and
- b. Commissioning a task force to research racist laws from Virginia's past. Over 100 laws were identified and are being recommended to be repealed including measures that resisted desegregation, prevented black voters from casting ballots and prohibited interracial marriage.

3. Commends Senator Kamala D. Harris, California for sponsoring 13. S.3721 — 116th Congress (2019-2020) A bill to provide for the establishment of a COVID-19 Racial and Ethnic Disparities Task Force to gather data about disproportionately affected communities and provide recommendations to combat the racial and ethnic disparities in the COVID-19 response.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Urges Refocusing Foreign and National Security Policy for International Cooperation  
To Address Global Needs Such As Pandemics and the Global Climate Crisis**

**Whereas,**

The United States faces a wide range of global threats such as climate change, pandemics, poverty, militarism, authoritarianism, and migration. According to the Strategic National Risk Assessment (SNRA) executed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Risk Management and Analysis, the greatest security risks to the US include global phenomena such as “cyber-attacks, pandemics, and catastrophic natural disasters.” These escalating global threats require the US to refocus on international diplomacy and cooperation as principal foreign and national security policy tools. As Rep. Gerry Connolly has aptly stated, “We cannot ignore the increasingly important role diplomacy and development play in meeting our most pressing security challenges and in demonstrating American leadership in global affairs.”

The global climate crisis has resulted in rising sea levels and increased intensity and frequency of natural disasters. According to Andrew Bacevich of the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, “Hurricane Katrina (2005), Hurricane Sandy (2012), Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria (2017),” and the virtually annual massive wildfires on the West Coast, have resulted in a cumulative cost exceeding a half-trillion dollars, and, together, these disasters “have taken the lives of several thousand more people than were lost in the 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.” To address the climate crisis, in 2015, the US joined all other United Nations (UN) member states to adopt the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisioning “a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination.” Additionally, in 2016, the US also joined over 170 other countries in signing the Paris Climate Agreement to reduce global greenhouse emissions. However, in 2019, the Trump administration reneged on the Paris Climate Agreement, betraying global hopes for climate action.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already cost the US around \$3 trillion based on the recently passed relief bills. Over 65,000 Americans have died from the pandemic as of May 2, 2020, and current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates indicate the death toll could be over 200,000 by August. By comparison, US deaths totaled 58,209 in the Vietnam War, 36,516 in the Korean war, 2,216 in Afghanistan, and 4,497 in Iraq. It is evident that global threats such as climate change and pandemics can be greater risks to the US public than foreign military adversaries.

Ensuring the stability of the global internet system from the growing national security threat of cyber-attacks and intrusion also requires global cooperation. Defense, intelligence, and cyber security experts have noted that reducing systemic risk is beyond the capacity of a single business or single government and have proposed the formation of an International Cyber Stability Board to help ensure that national and international authorities, relevant international supervisory bodies, and expert groups can effectively promote international internet stability.

The runaway, unaudited military budget, fueled by Republicans, is appropriating funds that could be used for vitally needed schools, universal single payer healthcare such as Medicare-for-All, infrastructure, and climate resiliency projects. According to Brown University, the total cost of wars to US taxpayers since 2001 is now about \$6.4 trillion and growing at over \$32 million per hour. Additionally, these wars have killed over 2 million people and created about 21 million refugees and displaced persons. At the same time, Trump and the Republicans have reduced investments in diplomacy, the UN, and other avenues of international cooperation. The Trump administration cut the Department of State (DOS) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) budget by 28% in 2017. In 2018, the Trump administration also ended all US funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). This February, Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY), rightly stated that “like the president’s previous budgets, this year’s request is a waste of the paper it’s printed on. Proposing such reckless cuts to our critical foreign policy tools isn’t a serious proposal.”

The US Government has stockpiled over 6,000 nuclear weapons comprising over 3,000 megatons of destructive energy capable of killing hundreds of millions of people; but not enough ventilators, face masks, or hand sanitizers for a pandemic which had been widely predicted for years. In fact, Trump and the Republicans have consistently attempted to cut the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and CDC budgets. Thankfully, Congressional Democrats prevented some of the threatened budget cuts. However, immediately upon taking office, the Trump administration instituted a hiring freeze throughout the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), leaving the CDC with about 700 vacancies. Furthermore, the Trump administration has delayed, balked at, and “expressed doubt about the need for ventilators.” Additionally, in the midst of the pandemic, the Trump administration has recently cut funding to the World Health Organization (WHO) at a time when the WHO is vitally needed to lead an emergency global public health response.

By contrast, recognizing the need for international cooperation to manage global health security, Rep. Gerry Connolly this year reintroduced *H.R.2166 - Global Health Security Act of 2019* to codify US investments in developing preparedness and response capacity abroad for public health threats. This bill also bolsters US commitments under the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), a multilateral initiative to build countries’ capacity to manage infectious disease threats and elevate health security as a global priority.

Wars in Afghanistan and the Middle East have continued for nearly 20 years with a massive cost in American lives, civilian casualties, and US treasure and influence. Additionally, support for inhumane wars, blockades, and belligerent military occupations against Yemen, Gaza, and the West Bank have resulted in large scale humanitarian crises. A further humanitarian crisis is also unfolding in Iran, as its efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic are being stifled by harsh sanctions imposed by the Trump administration after it unilaterally withdrew from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The Trump administration’s illegal recognition of the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the one-sided Trump-Netanyahu “deal of the century” plan, and Trump’s assassination of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, have undermined international law and order and risked starting another war. Conversely, Congressional Democrats have opposed these reckless and destructive Republican policies. Rep. Gerry Connolly has criticized Netanyahu’s “increasing disregard for international law and human rights,” joined 100 House Democrats in rejecting Trump’s “deal of the century” and called the administration’s briefing on the Soleimani assassination “sophomoric and utterly unconvincing.” In a very hopeful sign, the Democratic response to Trump’s dangerous provocations culminated with passage in both houses of Sen. Tim Kaine’s *S.J.Res.68* to prohibit military actions against Iran without Congressional authorization.

The cost of economic and military warfare is exorbitant, whereas, diplomacy and international cooperation are beneficial to all parties involved. Foreign policy and national security experts agree that economic globalization requires policies of diplomacy, international cooperation, and interdependence rather than adversarial behaviors such as economic and military warfare and “Kinetic Diplomacy”. As Senator Bernie Sanders has stated, “the United States must seek partnerships not just between governments, but between peoples. A sensible and effective foreign policy recognizes that our safety and welfare is bound up with the safety and welfare of others around the world.”

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** urges our elected officials to take actions, and introduce and pass legislation and resolutions that:

1. Refocus foreign policy and national security policy on global cooperation to tackle global and national security needs like pandemics, climate change, and cyber security;
2. Condemn and oppose Trump’s failed approach to the pandemic with respect to foreign and national security policy, and his budget cuts and attempted cuts for the CDC, NIH, DOS, USAID, UN, UNRWA, WHO, and other critical agencies;
3. Enact *H.R.2166 – Global Health Security Act of 2019*;
4. Restore and increase funding and support for the CDC, NIH, USAID, UN, UNRWA, WHO, and other federal and international agencies to increase our pandemic preparedness and international cooperation;

5. Enact legislation to establish a universal healthcare system such as *S.1129/H.R.1384 – Medicare for All Act of 2019* to provide the necessary US capacity for global collaboration during pandemics;
6. Increase funding and support for international law, human rights, and social and economic justice as key pillars of US foreign policy;
7. Support and enact legislation supporting global human rights, particularly including children living under or near military occupations and maneuvers and those under threat of violent and criminal activities;
8. Rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement, and facilitate funding increases and support for sustainable energy initiatives;
9. End support for inhumane sanctions, wars, blockades, and military occupations that waste US taxpayer dollars and undermine US global leadership and credibility;
10. Rebuild US alliances around the world to restore international respect for America and reaffirm our nation's constructive engagement in the United Nations and other multilateral organizations;
11. Re-engage in international cooperation to reduce threats posed by nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction;
12. Increase efforts to combat the interrelated global problems of hunger, poverty, homelessness, war, and disease; and
13. Help establish and lead an International Cyber Stability Board.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Condemns Genocidal Actions of Nation States**

**Whereas,**

Nation states are perpetrating genocidal activities in the Kurdish nation, India- Assam State, India-Kashmir, Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar, Burundi, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. The horrific killing, torture, and displacement of thousands of innocent adults and children is condemned by the civilized world community. These peoples have long endured major human rights violations that have caused both physical suffering, displacement and mass deaths by military ground offenses, aerial bombings, mass deportations, chemical weapons illegal usage, firing squads, looting and forced prostitution of their women.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls upon the Democratic National Committee to support and upon the Virginia Congressional Delegation to:

1. Introduce and support a joint congressional resolution condemning all ethnic cleansing and human genocide; and
2. Introduce and support a congressional resolution directing the American United Nations ambassador to present a formal declaration condemning genocide to the full body of the United Nations General Assembly.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention**  
**Supports Lifting Sanctions and Sending Aid to the People of Iran due to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**Whereas,**

The people of Iran have been among the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic having suffered some of the highest percentage of cases and deaths.

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (henceforth referred to as Iran) has been limited in its efforts to respond to the effects of the current pandemic by broad US-imposed economic sanctions which have resulted in drastic international banking restrictions. These restrictions have impeded Iran's attempts to finance humanitarian imports, including medicines and medical equipment.

These financing restrictions combined with the steep depreciation of Iran's currency, in large part caused by the Trump's administration's previous decision to withdraw without cause from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action successfully negotiated by the Obama-Biden administration, have caused huge constraints on the ability of Iranian companies and hospitals to purchase from outside of Iran necessary medicines and medical equipment.

Specifically pertaining to the pandemic, US imposed sanctions have decreased Iran's ability to acquire and provide its people an adequate amount of medical equipment for detection and treatment of the virus. When a COVID-19 vaccine is available, under current US sanctions, Iran will not be permitted to purchase it because vaccines are one of the items not covered by medical exemptions of US sanctions. US imposed sanctions have also limited the Iranian government's ability to support the Iranian people's needs during this crisis.

Due to the combination of the facts on the ground and the effects of US sanctions, the number of Iranian casualties as a result of the virus are estimated to go beyond 3 million people. Instead of celebrating, in preparation of their biggest holiday this year they had to dig mass graves. These sanctions currently cause the people of Iran to suffer far more than its government. President Trump's decision to increase sanctions against Iran during the pandemic is inhumane, ineffective, and will only lead to increased anti-American sentiment within the country, harming our foreign interests.

Many Democratic Representatives, Senators (including Tim Kaine of Virginia), former party leaders, and our presumed Democratic nominee for the 2020 Presidential elections, Vice President Biden, have expressed support for easing sanctions against Iran during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is consistent with the Democratic Party's commitment to human rights and its foreign policy. Furthermore, a global pandemic is *global*, therefore Iran's ability to combat COVID-19 is also in our collective best interest and in the best interest of our allies and troops stationed in the region.

There exists a precedent for the United States lifting sanctions on Iran during times of great crises, specifically when President George W. Bush did so in 2003 after southern Iran suffered a massive earthquake.

**Therefore, be it resolved,** the Convention:

1. Calls on the Trump administration and the Virginia Congressional delegation to, during the COVID-19 pandemic, temporarily lift those sanctions that limit Iran's ability both to respond adequately to the pandemic and to rebuild in the pandemic's aftermath, and to provide aid to mitigate the negative effects that our sanctions have already exacted (as the United States is doing with other countries);
2. Decries the humanitarian disaster that US sanctions have inflicted on Iran during the COVID-19 pandemic and that the principal victims of these sanctions are the people of Iran; and
3. Calls on the Trump administration and Congress to take immediate action to ease US sanctions and expand licensing of sanctions-exempt items to ensure Iran's people, companies, and hospitals have access to essential humanitarian resources during the pandemic.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Affirms Our Commitment to the Human Rights of the Palestinian People**

**Whereas,**

The Netanyahu and Gantz annexation plan of Palestinian land, the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem and the Trump administration's "Peace and Prosperity Plan" all upend long standing American foreign policy, are in violation of the principles of international law and United Nations resolutions, and are a blatant and flagrant infringement on Palestinian sovereignty and human rights.

The Occupation, land annexation, the wall, and the expansion of illegal settlements on Palestinian land undermine any chance for peace and the viability of a future Palestinian state by fragmenting and destroying the contiguity of the land within the 1967 borders.

Building military checkpoints, segregated areas and roads as well as physically blocking entrances and exits to and from Palestinian cities/town/villages with boulders and concrete blocks, effectively cutting off families from one another and from their livelihoods, puts the lives of men, women and children at risk and perpetuates violence.

Access to water and water aquifers for Palestinians on Palestinian land is controlled, restricted, and redirected to illegal settlements; sometimes only allowing a few days of water access to Palestinian villages/towns/cities, while the illegal settlements enjoy unlimited and uninterrupted access to clean water.

The annexation plan changes facts on the ground in violation of signed and longstanding agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis (mediated by successive US administrations) effectively constitute an aggression on the Palestinian People's inalienable rights, perpetuates violence, highlights racism and injustice as well as blatantly undermines basic Palestinian human rights.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Supports human rights, equality, freedom and self-determination for the Palestinian people;
2. Affirms the right of both the Palestinian people and Israeli people to live in peace and security;
3. Endorses H.R.2407 "Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act" cosponsored by 24 Democratic members of the House of Representatives; and
4. Condemns and denounces in the strongest terms the annexation of land and expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the Trump administration's "Peace and Prosperity Plan" and the endorsement of the illegal annexation agenda, and flagrant disregard of the Palestinian people's human rights and freedom.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Opposes the Occupation and Annexation of the West Bank**

### **Whereas,**

For over 50 years, Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem along with unchecked settlement expansion have been major obstacles to a just and peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. 61% of the West Bank is currently under Israeli control while the settler population has more than doubled since 2000 to over 400,000 in total. The Netanyahu government has only accelerated this trend by constructing 2,000 new units each year, many of them miles away from the border between Israel-proper and the West Bank. Netanyahu has even gone so far as to pledge to begin discussions on unilaterally annexing the Jordan Valley and other major West Bank settlement blocs by July 1<sup>st</sup> at the earliest.

Not only does Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, it has also forcibly displaced thousands of Palestinians and led to the systemic violation of their human rights. For instance, each settlement has the authority to appoint a "civilian security coordinator" (CSCs) who is not only armed, funded, and trained by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), but also has the ability to command nearby IDF soldiers in the field. Since CSCs are primarily accountable to members of their settlement in practice, they are effectively free to search, detain, arrest, and use force against Palestinians without probable cause or fear of accountability. Should Netanyahu follow through on his threat to annex major West Bank settlement blocs without granting citizenship to the Palestinians living there, many Palestinians would be permanently deprived of their human rights.

Israel certainly faces legitimate security threats and has a right to defend itself from extremist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. However, endless occupation and unchecked settlement expansion will only further jeopardize Israel's security. By continuing to build settlements, forcibly displace Palestinians in the West Bank, and refusing to constructively engage with the Palestinian Authority, Israel has given the Gazans virtually no reason to believe that their situation will at all improve if they oust Hamas from power. Numerous former IDF commanders and security experts have also stated that the financial and personnel costs of protecting the West Bank settlements overextend the Israeli military and leave the country more vulnerable to external threats such as Hezbollah and Daesh.

The overwhelming majority of the international community agrees that the most effective and feasible way to guarantee both Palestinian human rights and Israel's security is through the creation of a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories with possible mutually recognized land swaps. Unchecked settlement expansion, however, undermines this goal by increasing the number of settlements that would have to be dismantled for a Palestinian state to be economically viable. Annexing the Jordan Valley and major West Bank settlement blocs as Trump and Netanyahu have proposed would likely eliminate the possibility of any Palestinian state altogether by triggering the collapse of the Palestinian Authority and forcing Israel to take responsibility for the entire West Bank. Without the possibility of a two-state solution, Israel would either have to become a full-fledged apartheid state or a dangerously unstable binational state.

Progressive Israeli organizations such as Peace Now and Gush Shalom have worked to avoid this outcome by campaigning for an economic boycott of the West Bank settlements while opposing the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement as a whole. Parties such as Meretz have also called for measures such as immediately freezing settlement construction, unilaterally evacuating isolated settlements deep inside the West Bank, resuming negotiations with the Palestinian Authority. The Democratic Party, however, has yet to endorse any of these measures in its platform while Democratic Congressional leaders have so far failed to



publicly outline specific actions they would support should the Netanyahu government unilaterally annex part of the West Bank. As J Street's President Jeremy Ben-Ami said in a recent emergency briefing, leading Congressional Democrats could help deter Israel from annexing part of the West Bank if they appeared on Israeli media outlets to warn that doing so could cost Israel support in Congress.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Endorses J Street's "Change the Platform" campaign and calls for the 2020 Democratic Platform to reaffirm its commitment to Israel's security and a two-state solution while also explicitly opposing Israel's "ongoing occupation, settlement expansion and unilateral annexation of territory in the West Bank;"
2. Urges the government of Virginia and all Virginia businesses and consumers to join Peace Now, Gush Shalom, and other progressive Israelis in boycotting the West Bank settlements; and
3. Commends Representative Don Beyer for co-sponsoring HR 2407, the Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act. Calls upon the rest of Virginia's Congressional delegation to join him in order to ensure that American aid to Israel is not used in the lawful military detention of Palestinian minors.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention**  
**Supports Measures to End the Undue Influence of Charles Koch at George Mason University**  
**And Establish Appropriate Policies for Private Donations to Virginia’s Public Colleges and Universities**

**Whereas,**

George Mason University has for nearly four decades maintained a close relationship with the politically-committed, libertarian mega-billionaire Charles Koch--from whom it has received more funding than has any other institution of higher education and, in turn, has provided a base for more Koch-funded programs than has any other college or university. This has resulted in Charles Koch and like-minded allies (many of whom attend the biannual Koch-sponsored donor and policy summits) influencing certain GMU academic units and affiliated centers to develop and support libertarian policies that promote their political agenda and economic interests. As a result, George Mason University is often disparagingly referred to as "Koch-U." This university-donor relationship is quite complex; but here, briefly stated, are several telling and troubling highlights that reveal the urgent need for corrective action at George Mason University and for establishing appropriate protocols for the entire system of Virginia public higher education.

Charles Koch and corporate allies are principal supporters of the GMU-affiliated Law and Economics Center, which is the only American program of higher education that provides seminars for federal judges. (Previously, the Northwestern Law School also provided such seminars, but its Dean abolished the program in 2012, explaining that he opposed such corporate-sponsored seminars because "These programs should be free from any real or perceived conflict of interest.") In addition, the Law and Economics Center also offers conferences, courses and speakers for state attorneys-general and their staff lawyers, as well as for members of Congress and their staffs.

Brian Leiter, Director of the University of Chicago’s Center for Law, Philosophy and Human Values, who conducts research on law school scholarship, has asserted the faculty of the GMU Law School constitute "one of the most ideologically homogenous law schools in the nation. And the ideology is ‘the market is always right; get the government out of it’" ("George Mason University Becomes a Favorite of Charles Koch," Matthew Barakat, AP: Apr. 1, 2016).

Charles Koch and allies are principal supporters of the GMU-affiliated Mercatus Center ("mercatus" is Latin for "market")—described in the *Wall Street Journal* (July 16, 2004) as "the most important think tank you’ve never heard of" when "it comes to business regulation in Washington"—which consistently advocates for an agenda of small government, reduced taxes, deregulation and free markets.

The Mercatus Center claims it is the University’s biggest financial contributor to graduate education: in a recent year supporting 68 MA and PhD students in Mason’s Department of Economics—the faculty of which also receives strong Koch-support and, like the Law School, also shares a small-government, free-market ideology.

GMU conveniently rents space adjacent to the Mercatus Center to another Koch-supported center, the Institute of Humane Studies, which recruits young people, chiefly undergraduates, to attend summer seminars that include libertarian lectures and discussion along with internships at Koch-supported NGOs, like-minded congressional offices, and conservative publications--thus contributing to what some Koch documents refer to as a "talent pipeline."

The often-successful efforts of Charles Koch and allies to lower taxes and shrink government services has contributed to reduced government support for higher education, imposing serious economic hardship on students and their parents and contributing to harsh student indebtedness that intensifies our nation’s growing economic inequality.

Furthermore, Northern Virginia students who wish to live at home and study law or economics at their local public university will find it difficult to receive diverse perspectives on the discipline they are studying. Indeed, Charles Koch himself has stated his funding of universities is intended to mainstream free-market ideas and approaches to public policy that support the Koch network’s legislative goals at the state and federal levels.

The mission of public universities is to provide an affordable education, objective instruction, and research that serves the public good. But investigative efforts of GMU students and faculty have revealed that the Charles Koch Foundation has a pattern of exercising improper influence upon hiring, firing, scholarly inquiry, and curriculum development.

In addition, Charles Koch has consistently preferred to operate with a low profile and in a covert manner—often preferring to channel monies through organizations such as Donors Trust and Donors Capital Fund that hide the giver’s identity, to support like-minded organizations that cloak their political agendas inside neutral-sounding names and statements of mission, and to host biannual summits with strictly-limited public and media access.

Public universities should conduct themselves with full transparency and avoid even the appearance of allowing their programs to be influenced by private donors and/or politically active non-profit organizations.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** urges the Virginia Governor, Attorney General, Virginia State Legislators, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) exercise the needed oversight to guarantee that all of Virginia’s public colleges and universities:

1. Develop adequate measures to prevent donors from influencing instruction and research to serve their personal economic and/or political interests;
2. Provide full transparency regarding all forms of donations and funding; and
3. Establish a process to review, manage, and potentially disaffiliate from centers, institutes, and programs unduly influenced by the private interests of donors in violation of the principles of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) protecting academic freedom, academic integrity, and transparency.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Tuition Free Public Colleges, Universities,  
Trade Schools for All and Cancelling Student Debt**

**Whereas,**

Postsecondary education is critical for America's future. According to a study by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, by 2020, 65% of all jobs will require education past high school. Moreover, a highly educated populace is beneficial to society at large. According to the aforementioned study, the United States is expected to face an ever-growing shortage of millions of workers who meet the labor market's post-secondary education requirements.

Unfortunately, postsecondary education is increasingly unaffordable. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, between the 2006-07 and 2016-17 school years, tuition and fees for undergraduate public institutions rose by 31%, adjusting for inflation. Despite this rampant price increase, according to a report by the Economic Policy Institute, the average wage of young college graduates has only grown by 1.4% since 2000. This unaffordable cost-of-attendance dissuades many Americans from pursuing postsecondary education, and those who do are saddled with debt. In fact, the average college student graduates with \$30,000 in student loans. Nationally, student debt exceeds \$1.6 trillion.

Moreover, equity gaps in higher education perpetuate income inequality from one generation to the next.. According to a 2018 report by the Washington Post, "Children from families earning more than \$90,000 have a 1-in-2 chance of getting a bachelor's degree by 24. That falls to a 1 in 17 chance for families earning under \$35,000." And, as per a 2018 report by The Institute for College Access & Success, 23% of first-generation college students default on their student loans within 12 years.

Notably, universal programs are politically resilient because everyone, regardless of income, benefits, as demonstrated by Social Security and Medicare, two of the country's most popular programs. Although means-testing often functions as an agent of division between groups that benefit more and groups that benefit less, universal programs provide a point of unity, withstand political attacks, and encourage common investment.

Finally, current and past Democratic presidential candidates have a longstanding commitment to making college accessible for all. The Democratic Party at the local, state, and federal levels has a record of increasing investment in student financial aid, Pell Grants, and community colleges. Virginia's own Governor has pledged to "strengthen our Virginia system of higher education by committing to invest more in our colleges and universities to ensure access, affordability, and excellence." Free postsecondary training and education will be more needed than ever to ameliorate the economic hardships arising in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Recent high-school graduates now face a very difficult job market and will need enhanced skills and education to secure employment.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention;**

1. Urges measures to make all public colleges, universities, and trade schools free and accessible for all, and the cancellation of student debt.
2. Calls on the Virginia Democratic Delegation to the United States Congress to:
  - a. Pass the College for All Act of 2019 (H.R.3472, S. 1947) to "eliminate tuition and fees at four-year public colleges and universities, tribal colleges, community colleges, trade schools, and apprenticeship programs;"
  - b. Pass the Student Debt Cancellation Act of 2019 (H.R.3448, S.1947) to "forgive the outstanding balance of interest and principal due on all eligible Federal student loans;"
  - c. Increase Pell Grant funding to low-income students to cover non-tuition costs of attendance such as housing, books, and supplies;
  - d. Cap federal student loan interest rates; and
  - e. Increase funding to Historically Black Colleges, Minority Serving Institutions, and TRIO and Gear UP Programs to alleviate the class, ability, and racial disparities in higher education.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Urges Sustaining Our Democracy by Enhancing Civic Education for all Virginians**

**Whereas,**

Effective education equips students with the knowledge and critical thinking required to preserve democracy. Teaching students civics, social studies, government structure, judicial system and public policy are essential knowledge and life skills. Teaching mutual understanding, collective responsibility, the threats of bigotry, how to evaluate information, and how to contest structural inequalities are crucial prerequisites to achieving a just society. The proliferation of “fake news,” and outright lies from public officials has led to an increasingly polarized society. In the words of FDR, “democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.” We must provide students with a wide range of knowledge and perspectives, as well as the critical thinking and analysis tools to help them navigate misinformation, inaccuracy, fallacy, and ignorance.

The benefits of civic education are clear. Robust instruction in these subjects exposes the damage and atrocities caused by bigotry and prevents extremism. Understanding collective responsibility promotes empathetic politics that seeks justice for all, and spurs on action to address inequalities that permeate society. Finally, civics teaches students to advocate for themselves rather than solely deferring to arbitrary authority, and to make informed decisions both in and outside of political processes. Unfortunately, social studies education has lost funding and focus nationwide, and particularly in low-income school districts. To achieve a tolerant and empathetic deliberative democracy, we must reverse this trend with massive investments in liberal arts education with a global focus. To neglect such instruction would leave our children unprepared for the reality of the world in which diverse opinions, cultures, identities, and experiences exist.

Moreover, our current environment includes misinformation, ignorance, bigotry, conspiracy, and lack of differentiation between baseless claims and empirical evidence has exacerbated extremism and polarization. The last four years of the Trump administration have made the dangers of “fake news” clear. Though we cannot control dishonest actors both on the internet and in real life, we are fully able to empower our population with the tools they need to be able to intelligently navigate such pitfalls. It must start in primary and secondary schools. A 2016 report by Stanford History Education Group found that students have a hard time distinguishing advertisements from news articles, identifying sources of information, distinguishing credible information from misinformation and opinion, and evaluating sources based on reliable criteria. It is imperative that school curriculum incorporate internet literacy, and logic and fact-checking skills.

Although civic education must be revitalized and expanded, science curriculum will continue to be imperative. Science is a significant part of human culture and represents one of the pinnacles of human thinking capacity. However, one of the biggest misconceptions is embodied in the recently popularized phrase “I believe in science.” Courses in the sciences must ensure that the scientific method and logic are taught clearly and thoroughly, as the very crux of science is that it is fact, not belief. Courses in the sciences should be expanded to include earth and climate sciences as well as psychological concepts, logical fallacies, and debate.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** urges the incoming Biden administration, as well as local, state, and federal governments to enhance the United States education system by:

1. Increasing investment in civics, social studies, government, elections and public policy education and expanded curriculum to include political theory, world history and geography, global awareness, and environmental science and policy ,
2. Expanding standard courses in the sciences to include earth and climate sciences, reasoning , logical fallacies, and to emphasize the scientific method, logic, and debate;

3. Incorporating internet literacy, civic online reasoning, and fact-checking skills into the curricula to teach students to distinguish credible information from misinformation and opinion, as well as evaluate sources based on reliable criteria such as the standard currency, reliability, authority and purpose/point of view (CRAP) test, reverse-image search, and other vetted methods;
4. Implementing online regulations to identify sources of paid advertising and flag published falsehoods and misinformation;
5. Ensuring that Virginia joins with other states in achieving these goals and aiming to avoid scams and misinformation; and
6. Providing funds for citizen education to be sufficiently literate and aware of scams and to judge truthfulness.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Calls for Strengthening of Anti-Bullying Laws in Virginia Schools**

**Whereas,**

The 2017 School Crime Supplement (National Center for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice) and the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) indicate that, nationwide, about 20% of students ages 12-18 experienced bullying on school property. These same reports also indicate that, among students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied at school during the school year, about 15% were bullied online or by text. Students who are bullied are at risk and more likely to experience depression and anxiety, increased feelings of sadness and loneliness, changes in sleep and eating patterns, and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy. Students who are bullied have decreased academic achievement and are more likely to miss or drop out of school.

Virginia school districts must include policies and procedures that prohibit bullying in district codes of student conduct. Virginia anti-bullying laws require districts to establish character education programs and direct the Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety to provide training for Virginia public school personnel in school safety, on evidence-based anti-bullying tactics, based on the definition of bullying in state law, and in the effective identification of students who may be at risk for violent behavior and in need of special services or assistance. Virginia anti-bullying laws direct the principal of each school to notify the parent of any student involved in an alleged incident of bullying of the status of any investigation within five school days of the allegation of bullying. However, Virginia anti-bullying laws do not cover off-campus conduct and there are no specific groups listed under Virginia anti-bullying laws or regulations. Virginia anti-bullying laws also do not require districts to provide safeguards or mental health support for students involved with bullying.

In comparison, New Jersey is home to one the toughest anti-bullying laws in the nation. In September 2011, the *Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights* took effect in response to the widely publicized suicide of a Rutgers University student who was humiliated online. The law requires schools to prevent, report, investigate, and respond to bullying. The law also requires training for teachers, school staff, and school board members. School districts must have district anti-bullying coordinators, school anti-bullying specialists, and school safety teams (which includes a parent of a student). Every year, school districts must report bullying incidents to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJ DOE). The NJ DOE gives each school district and each school in the district a grade on how the school district or school is carrying out the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights. School districts are required to post the report and the grade their schools have received on their website. In 2017, New Jersey adopted Mallory's Law named after Mallory Grossman who committed suicide when she was 11 after being bullied on school grounds and harassed via Snapchat and text messages. This law requires that all accounts of bullying be forwarded to the county superintendent, and the parents of students involved in the incident be notified. Proven acts of bullying are added to a student's permanent record. Under the measure, students on their third offense are required to attend anti-bullying training with their parents. Law enforcement are notified to see if any crimes have been committed. And parents of a student who is proven to be bullying may face civil liability in certain cases, specifically if they demonstrate "blatant disregard of supervising their child."

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Democratic Senate and the House of Delegates to strengthen anti-bullying laws in schools in Virginia.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Calls for Adopting Universal Quality Childcare and Pre-K for All**

**Whereas,**

Safe, affordable childcare and early education remains elusive and completely unaffordable for working-class families in Virginia. We need the political will to develop high-quality, comprehensive, early education programs for every child age 0-5 in Virginia, regardless of zip code, income, or immigration status. While The U. S. Department of Health and Human Services qualifies “affordable childcare” as costing no more than 7 percent of a family’s income, families are spending between 9 and 22 percent of their income on childcare on average. For low-income families, the burden is even higher: a full 35 percent of their income goes toward childcare. And when it comes to the proportion of income spent on childcare, single parents spend more than double what married parents spend. Beyond the affordability crisis, parents also have to meet eligibility requirements for the Virginia Child Subsidy Program that are unreasonable and discriminatory. It is unacceptable that in the wealthiest nation on earth, having children is a leading cause of poverty. Unaffordable childcare creates a cycle of poverty that extends into the next generation and should be replaced by universal free childcare and pre-K for all.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Calls on the Virginia Delegation to United States Congress to:
  - a. Support or cosponsor S. 1878 Universal Childcare and Learning Act introduced by Senator Elizabeth Warren;
  - b. Sufficiently fund the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, which supports home visiting services from nurses, mental health professionals, social workers, and other support professionals for families with young children who live in low-income and at-risk communities;
  - c. Support or cosponsor a Universal School Meals Act such as that introduced by US Senator Bernie Sanders with Representative Ilhan Omar, which provides year-round, free universal school meals –breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks– to every child in childcare and pre-k;
  - d. Construct, renovate, or rehabilitate the childcare facilities and pre-schools needed throughout the country;
  - e. Support or cosponsor actions such as the Thurgood Marshall Plan for Public Education introduced by US Senator Bernie Sanders to make transformative investments in our public education system to ensure the developmental gains made by implementing universal childcare and pre-k are built upon when children start their K-12 education; and
  - f. Provide early childhood workers with strong protections and the information and tools they need to perform their important work safely and fairly.
2. Calls on the Governor of Virginia and the elected representatives of the Virginia General Assembly of Virginia to:
  - a. Redefine educators, childcare, and healthcare workers’ jobs as necessary to create sustainable jobs essential building a sustainable, thriving civilization;
  - b. Repeal the Virginia Subsidy Program eligibility criteria that requires documentation of child's citizenship or legal residence in the United States so that all Virginia inhabitants receive these essential societal benefits.
  - c. Repeal the Virginia Subsidy program eligibility criteria that requires active employment status; and
  - d. Enact measures to strengthen organizing protections , workplace safety and health regardless of immigration status.



## The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Urges Equity and Excellence in Education

### Whereas,

The United States public education system is riddled with inequity. Fundamentally, property tax-based funding of public primary and secondary schools ensures that students in wealthy school districts receive quality instruction but leaves behind students in low-income school districts. The results are cyclical and unacceptable: experienced teachers opt to avoid employment in low-paying school districts, and generations of students are denied equitable education. This issue has only been exacerbated by education policy that centers market competition and consumer choice, such as that championed by the Republican Party. As explained in a 2015 Brigham Young law report, low-income schools “need to have resources allocated to them, otherwise opportunity disparity will continue to increase.”

Education inequity is an intersectional issue. According to a 2018 report, the white-Hispanic gap in eighth grade reading scores was 19 points; the white-Black gap was 25 points. These gaps are comparable to the same statistics from 1992, indicating that despite efforts to improve public education over the last 30 years, wealth and racial disparities continue to divide our school systems. In fact, according to a 2017 report by Christian Sundquist, a Professor of Law at Albany Law School, “the primary determinants of student success have been racial bias, family background, and socioeconomic status.”

Moreover, more than 69 years after Barbara Rose Johns led the walkout at the Moton School in Farmville, Virginia and had her case consolidated into *Brown v. Board of Education*, school segregation is still rampant. According to a 2019 report by the EdBuild organization, the majority of American students attend racially concentrated school systems. Predominantly white school districts receive \$23 billion more than nonwhite school districts, a reflection of the country’s racial wealth gap. Poor-white school districts receive \$150/student less than the national average, but still \$1500 more than poor-nonwhite school districts. The detriments of inequitable and segregated education are clear: not only is quality education critical to acquire jobs, but it is also intrinsically good for our deliberative democracy. To close racial and economic achievement gaps and achieve equity and excellence in education, the United States must implement increased funding and federal oversight for primary and secondary schools.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention,** to provide every student equitable education, urges the incoming Biden administration, as well as the federal, state, and local governments to:

1. Regionalize school districts to broaden funding tax bases, cut down on administrative costs, and optimize investment in education, as recommended by Congress’s 2013 Equity and Excellence Commission, to substantially cut down on funding gaps between wealthy and low-income school districts;
2. Provide supplemental federal funding to low-income school districts to mitigate ongoing zip code inequality;
3. Provide incentives for states to explore and pursue ways to reduce the number of schools with concentrated poverty;
4. Establish state and federal jobs incentives for educators to fill teacher shortages and encourage working in low-income school districts;
5. Establish a starting teacher salary of \$60,000;
6. Ensure that American Indian and Alaska Native Tribes, as well as the Bureau of Indian Education, have access to all education funding opportunities;
7. Provide grants to improve data availability on finance and student performance such that state and federal education agencies can monitor the efficacy of their efforts;
8. Execute and enforce orders and appoint federal judges who will enforce the 1964 Civil Rights Act; namely Title VI, Title IX; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, to stop discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and disability in school systems;
9. Build on the *Strength in Diversity Act* to increase federal funding for community-driven strategies to desegregate schools;
10. Replace punitive discipline models that disproportionately target Black and Brown students and exacerbate the school-to-prison-pipeline with restorative justice models;
11. Invest in mental health resources in schools to provide students needed support;
12. Expand bias training for teachers and school administrators, so that, among other things, teachers can communicate and teach better to their students who are children of color, English learners, and students with disabilities; and
13. Hire additional qualified teachers and administrators of color at high level.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Urges Defending Climate and Ecosystem Support**

### **Whereas,**

All species and ecosystems have intrinsic value which is neither conferred nor revocable, and is prima facie deserving of equal concern, consideration, and protection. The environment is the most important aspect of life, as it affects every facet of living, and every other issue, both political and personal, from our health to the level of innovation we achieve, to the wars we fight. While conservation of the environment has intrinsic, non-anthropocentric importance, it is nevertheless a fact that the environment, human animals, and non-human animals are inextricably interconnected. So too are the environment and human economies, which have repeatedly been devastated by ecosystem collapse and environmental devastation- and will continue to be if action is not taken immediately and aggressively to combat the current environmental and climate crisis.

Human-created climate change is the single most important and dire threat facing our planet, the existence of which is not a debate. Man-made greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas are the chief cause of climate change. This change is additionally accelerating at an unprecedented rate in Earth's history.

The IPCC "Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C" (2018) and the 2018 Fourth National Climate Assessment concluded that human activity is the dominant cause of observed climate change over the past century, and that a changing climate is causing rise in sea levels, an increase in wildfires, severe storms, droughts, and other extreme weather events that threaten human life, healthy communities, ecosystems, and critical infrastructure. A 2019 study from the National Bureau of Economic Research found that, if emissions are not significantly cut in keeping with even the lax goals of the Paris Climate Accord treaty, the US would see a 10.5% cut in real income by 2100 and a -35% change in GDP per capita by 2100. The study finds that no country will be spared the ill effects of the climate emergency, and none will see a net benefit from global warming.

The United States has historically been responsible for a disproportionate amount of greenhouse gas emissions, having emitted 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions through 2014 and has a high technological capacity. Therefore, the United States has the established obligation to take a leading role in reducing emissions through economic and ecological transformation.

The continued threat of climate change, pollution, and ecological destruction put us at an increased threat of pandemics and susceptibility to infection and disease, thereby making climate change a direct threat to human life and health, one specifically outlined by bodies such as the WHO.

Frequently the origins of new pathogens such as SARS-CoV-2 stem from environmental degradation. As previously occurred with SARS (2003), the swine flu (2009) and MERS (2012), close contact between wild species and humans allowed the virus to cross between species resulting in the appearance of a new human disease that rapidly spread in the globalized world. Over-exploitation of natural resources resulting in the appearance of a new human disease that rapidly spread in the globalized world. Over-exploitation of natural resources to respond to the growing human population's increasing demands for energy and animal-based foods increase the frequency of this contact.

In the last century, about half of the emerging infectious diseases of zoonotic origin resulted from changes in land use, agricultural practices and food production to respond to such demands.

Unique and fragile ecosystems are also often sources for the development of medicines and treatments, including those for widespread plagues such as cancer, and thus our health, as well as future scientific and medical advancement, directly depends on the survival of these threatened habitats.

In addition to ecosystem destruction, the primary driver of disease risk is bushmeat hunting, trophy hunting (symbols of wealth), wildlife trafficking for zootherapeutics, entertainment, and exotic pet trade. The US, along with PPC and the EU, has the leading demands for "trophy" body parts and body parts traded within the illegal and legal wildlife trafficking world.

The IPBES 2019 report found that the health of ecosystems on which we and all other species depend is deteriorating more rapidly than ever, with 75% of the land-based environment and about 66% of the marine environment damaged by human action. We are eroding the very foundations of our economies, livelihoods, food security, health and quality of life worldwide. Plastic pollution has increased tenfold since 1980, 300-400 million tons of heavy metals, solvents, toxic sludge and other wastes from industrial facilities are dumped annually into the world's waters, and fertilizers entering coastal ecosystems have produced more than 245,000 km<sup>2</sup> of ocean 'dead zones'.

Industrial animal production for food is unsustainable in terms of resource usage, and contributes to numerous forms of environmental degradation. Factory-style animal agriculture creates environmental and public health concerns, including pollution from the high concentration of animal wastes and the extensive use of antibiotics, which may compromise their effectiveness in medical use. The heavy use of pesticides in industrial agriculture are associated with elevated risks for cancer and other dysfunction.

Against their own scientists' warnings that continued burning of fossil fuels would cause increased global temperatures, the fossil fuel industry continues to start new oil and gas projects as well as new investments that are inconsistent with global efforts to limit climate change and its effects.

In addition to continuing to extract fossil fuels from the earth, oil and gas companies reported spending over \$103 Million on the 2016 US Federal Elections; taxpayer assets were given to the fossil fuel industry to the tune of \$20 Billion in direct subsidies and \$1.1 Billion worth of public land was sold to oil and gas companies in 2018.

Finally, the Paris Climate Accord agreement is in large part a non-binding treaty with provisions which fall far short of action needed. This treaty therefore cannot be used as a goal for actions taken by the United States.

Changing course on this human-made emergency is fully within our control, but time is rapidly running out to avert catastrophic consequences to our planet and people. Aggressive and uncompromising policies on environmental protection and climate action are the only sensible and moderate option.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** urges the incoming Biden administration as well as local, state, and federal governments to:

1. Achieve negative-carbon (rather than net-zero) greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 (achieving the half-way point by 2030) through emission reduction and a fair and just transition for all communities and workers;
2. Establish methods by which environmental and ecosystem damage is factored into calculations such as the GDP and other similar evaluations of prosperity and well-being;
3. Eliminate government subsidies to fossil fuel industry, factory agricultural industry, as well as all other unsustainable business while redirecting needed funds to small, sustainable, and humane farms, the renewable energy sector, and similar business which can demonstrate a clear and unquestionable financial need;
4. Ensure that regulations and environmental assessments include the intrinsic, prima facie value of ecosystems, species, and habitats, not solely their instrumental value and economic value of development. Ensure that costs and losses resulting from environmental and ecosystem damage are heavily weighted in consideration of permits, allowances, and other such questions;
5. Establish resources, public works production, and necessary aid to communities employed by the energy and other affected industries to serve as a bridge as we transition immediately and efficiently away from fossil fuels, factory farming, and other unsustainable industries toward sustainable and renewable energy, agriculture, and trade;
6. Invest in infrastructure and industry of the US to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
7. Combat through regulation and all other means wildlife and animal trafficking and abuse, mistreatment and abuse of farm and agriculture animals, habitat destruction and all other similarly overlooked issues which contribute to the threats to human and planetary health, sustainability, and their mutually beneficial symbiosis;
8. Establish strict and advanced environmental regulation to protect air, water, ecosystems, and habitats in addition to the reversal of Trump administration roll-backs;
9. Establish that, prior to the approval for use of chemicals, techniques, and other such articles, said chemical or method must be scientifically proven safe for human and environmental health. Require the proof of burden be met by industry in question.
10. Establish methods of aid to communities most impacted by environmental damage and climate change;
11. Establish animal cruelty laws which protect all animals regardless of species and use, criminalizing abusive behaviour without different species-based standards to reinforce that it is the behaviour itself which is unacceptable;
12. Work to implement farm animal protections and incentives to reduce animal farming in factory settings, and aid small farms in their struggle to survive as factory farms drive them out of business;
13. Establish additional funding for ecosystem and wildlife rehabilitation, reforestation, and other methods of damage repair;
14. Regulate terms and advertising currently prevalent in the 'greenwashing' of products, services, and industry. Define and regulate terms such as "environmentally friendly", "cruelty free", "eco friendly", "cage free", "free range", "sustainable", "non-toxic", "biodegradable", "recyclable", and all other such currently unregulated and meaningless terms;
15. Designate significant funding for the purposes of ecosystem and species protection and rehabilitation, as well as effective and widespread enforcement of trafficking and exploitation bans, and rescue and rehabilitation;
16. Assign genuinely appropriate subsidies to vetted and regulated wildlife rehabilitation and protection organisations and groups;
17. Work alongside and exert influence upon other nations to the end that policies of ecosystem and species protection are implemented and enforced globally;
18. Implement a complete ban on any form of wildlife trafficking and trade, to include trophy and canned hunting, as well as the import of any type of trophy body parts, within all borders of the United States and its territories, as well as at the state level;
19. Establish protections for the use of animals in entertainment, to include circuses, tourist attractions, exotic pets, and other such endeavours;
20. Implement an active policy of consistent pressure on other nations to join in the banning of all wildlife trafficking and exploitation and establish methods and financing by which enforcement can be effectively realised even in struggling locales;
21. Implement explicit consideration of the views, perspectives and rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities in order to utilize their knowledge and understanding of large regions and ecosystems, and their desired future development pathways. Recognition of these groups, their knowledge, innovations and practices, institutions and values, as well as their inclusion and participation in environmental governance often enhances their quality of life, as well as nature conservation, restoration and sustainable use;
22. Take aggressive action on both large and small scale endeavours such as bans on certain single-use plastics, regulations and help to communities, HOAs, and similar groups to plan actions with consideration of environment and non-human species;
23. Aggressively implement recommendations of the (IPBES) 2019 report within agricultural, marine, urban and other areas to manage and create sustainable agriculture, landscape planning, fisheries, industry, engagement of actors in the food systems, among others;

24. Establish a method of tracking the US climate response, to include not only changes to sustainable energy, but also the rate at which the US moves away from factory farming, unsustainable agriculture, restores habitats and ecosystems, and other such initiatives;
25. Create a method of providing aid to developing countries for sustainable climate action in which this aid would help build capabilities to support developing countries' educational and industrial bases necessary for their renewable development; and
26. Ensure that Public Domain is reverted to its original use, in that this method will no longer be available for use by private entities and corporations. Private land will remain private unless a government entity claims eminent domain; and
27. Enact legislation such as H.Res.109/S.Res59, and adopt binding policy and pass law requiring compliance with IPCC Guidelines to move aggressively toward a clean energy future.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Comprehensive Environmental Legislation for Virginia  
Building Off of the Virginia Clean Economy Act**

**Whereas,**

On October 8, 2018, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a special report that stressed that we are running out time to save our planet. It called for bold, decisive action in order to combat the rising temperatures of our environment. The world is currently 1°C above pre-industrial levels, and already experiencing effects such as: extreme weather events, coastal flooding and threatened ecosystems. If the global temperature is allowed to rise more than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, impacts will worsen and may cause irreversible damage to ecosystems, the weather, land coverage, and communities around the world.

On November 28, 2018, the Federal Government issued the Fourth National Climate Assessment Report, which detailed the damage climate change has already imposed on the American economy and projected that it will increasingly affect important sectors of the economy and daily life including, water, air, agriculture/food production, human health, and coastal flooding. No one will remain unaffected by this climate crisis. However, marginalized populations including people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, elderly, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and the unhoused will suffer disproportionately.

Social, racial, economic, and environmental justice must be the centerpiece of any initiative to combat climate change. In 2019, HJ 724 was introduced in the Virginia House of Delegates. The resolution stressed the need for an emergency statewide plan, which promotes a just transition to a clean energy economy through lifting working families.

Introduced in 2020, HB 77 outlined the groundwork which would create thousands of sustainable jobs including construction on renewable energy projects, maintenance on those projects, and manufacturing jobs to create the necessary equipment for construction. These jobs would be highly concentrated in lower income and rural areas because of the availability of space for wind, solar, and other renewable sources, thus creating new economic opportunity for a stimulus in those communities. There would be large investments in job training and workforce development for the jobs that were created, which would mean those who have lost their jobs in formerly coal mining towns in Southwest Virginia could receive the necessary training to be gainfully employed free of charge.

The Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) signed into law in 2020 calls for 73% or more of the state's electricity to come from clean energy by 2035, achieving a 100% goal by 2050 by generating 2,500 MW of offshore wind energy by 2026, part of the overall 5.2 GW by 2034, as well as 3,000 MW of solar and land-based wind by 2022. However, there are gaps in the law that need to be addressed.

In view of the warnings raised by the aforementioned studies, there is a need to escalate the timeline from 2050 to 2036. Additionally, there is no mention of utilizing union labor, project labor agreements, and workforce development programs that would be crucial in assisting our rural and lower-income communities. Also required are more investments in transportation to limit the amount of air pollution created by traffic in the Commonwealth.

Expanding our renewable portfolio and reaching 100% reliance on renewable energy by 2036 is the goal. In addition to building new renewable energy projects, another goal would be establishing a moratorium on fossil fuel projects and pipelines, similar to the Mountain Valley and Atlantic Coast Pipelines, which have threatened historic African American areas, local farmers, and other vulnerable communities in the southwestern region of Virginia. The moratorium would begin with withholding new approvals on fossil fuel projects after the act is passed.

Virginia cannot afford to be complacent when it comes to our climate. We must take bold action to ensure a green, clean, and prosperous future for all.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on all Democratic General Assembly members to pursue comprehensive environmental legislation including the following tenets and requirements:

1. Equitable Labor

- a. A just and equitable renewables plan building off the 2020 Virginia Clean Economy Act that leaves no workers or communities behind;
- b. The establishment of job training programs and energy worker protections through project labor agreements and prevailing wage requirements for construction, and union neutrality agreements and living wage standards for permanent employees; and
- c. Transitional assistance for workers in the fossil fuel industry and affected communities;

2. Prudent Benchmarks

- a. Escalating the VCEA Timeline so that there will be 100% reliance on renewable energy for electricity generation in Virginia by 2036 with a proper and responsible schedule to achieve it; and
- b. A 36 percent reduction in electric energy consumption in buildings by 2035 by increasing the standards in which we hold our buildings to be environmentally conscious;

3. Investments in Infrastructure

- a. Prioritization of equitable, affordable & clean transportation systems;
- b. Large investments and job-training programs in renewables, building an energy efficient smart-grid, residential and commercial energy efficiency, & more;
- c. Investments in local-scale agriculture in communities across Virginia; and
- d. A moratorium, effective the following calendar year on approval by any state agency or political subdivision of any approval required for:
  - Electric generating facilities that generate fossil fuel energy through the combustion of a fossil fuel resource;
  - Import or export terminals for fossil fuel resources;
  - Certain maintenance activities relating to an import or export terminal for a fossil fuel resource;
  - Gathering lines or pipelines for the transport of any fossil fuel resource that requires the use of eminent domain on private property;
  - Certain maintenance activities relating to such gathering lines or pipelines;
  - Refineries of a fossil fuel resource; and
  - Exploration for any type of fossil fuel, unless preempted by applicable federal law.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Carbon Emissions Pricing to Reduce Carbon Emissions**

**Whereas,**

Global climate change is an urgent threat to the wellbeing of the United States and the international community, and is driven by human activity, principally carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from fossil fuel combustion. Carbon pricing can effectively reduce carbon emissions and should be undertaken along with other policies as a multi-pronged approach to address climate change.

The Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act (H.R. 763) would impose a \$15/metric ton CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent fee on fossil fuels at the point of emission, or where they enter the US economy, and increase the fee by \$10/metric ton per year, or \$15/metric ton if the emissions reduction target is not met in the prior year, until US emissions reach 10% of 2016 levels. H.R. 763 would establish an ambitious emissions reduction schedule that would put the United States on track to meet its obligations under the Paris Climate Agreement, though further action is needed to keep global warming to 2°C following IPCC reporting. The bill would also divide the carbon fee revenue into equal shares and pay a monthly dividend to all US households, projected to provide a family of four with nearly \$3,500 in annual dividends after 10 years.

H.R. 763 has bipartisan support in the House of Representatives and has the largest number of cosponsors on a carbon pricing bill to date in the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress (80 as of 2/21/2020). It would not restrict state and local governments from implementing additional policies to curb carbon pollution. It would also not limit the ability of the federal government, state governments, organizations, or individuals to sue fossil fuel companies. H.R. 763 would protect EPA's authority to issue Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards to regulate emissions from vehicles. It would pause a narrow set of federal CO<sub>2</sub> regulations that would be redundant or ineffective upon implementing the carbon fee – such as the Trump administration's Affordable Clean Energy (ACE) plan, which does not effectively reduce US emissions and may in fact drive emissions higher. If emissions reduction targets are not met after 10 years, H.R. 763 would mandate that EPA regulate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to meet the targets set by the emissions reduction schedule.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** endorses the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019 (H.R. 763) and calls upon all members of the Virginia Congressional Delegation to co-sponsor H.R. 763, or the corresponding Senate bill once introduced.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Legislation to Protect Nesting Habitats of Seabirds**

**Whereas,**

Seabirds, also called marine birds, are species adapted to life in the marine environment. In Virginia, nesting seabirds include the terns and pelicans that dive for fish, black skimmers that hunt by flying with their bills slicing the water, and the gulls common to our harbors and marshes. Other interesting members of this group include puffins, gannets, albatrosses and penguins. These species nest on the ground, often on small islands, where remoteness and small island size protects them from predators.

A recent study published in the journal Plos One, estimated that the world's seabird numbers declined 70% between 1950 and 2010. In Virginia, between 1993 and 2018, Terns declined 54%, gulls 64%, and black skimmers 59% (study coordinated by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries). If these rates continue, these species will be extinct in Virginia in 25 years, or close to it. A key reason for these declines has been habitat loss. In Virginia, there is a lack of small predator-free nesting islands. The solution is simple: build small islands with sand dredged from shipping channels which currently is dumped in the ocean. In many cases, it would be cheaper to build an island than to ship sand to the ocean. This will be a needed conservation technique in the face of sea-level rise.

Ocean dumping of valuable sand is, at least in part, driven by the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (1976, P.L. 94-265) was amended in 1996 to include protection of "essential fish habitat" (EFH). The Act requires that, when projects are authorized, funded or constructed by federal agencies (action agencies), the action agencies must consult with NOAA to minimize destruction of Essential Fish Habitat. Projects involving placement of sand in subtidal or intertidal areas often fall under this provision of law. The Essential Fish Habitat Program has, in general, been a very good thing, but there is a quirk.

While EFH generally doesn't preclude major construction projects, such as bridge-building or beach nourishment, federal agencies (such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) generally resist projects meant for bird conservation. In addition to seabirds, other species (shorebirds, seals, horseshoe crabs, for example) may benefit from strategic sand placement which currently is very difficult under the Magnuson-Stevens Act.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention encourages:**

1. The United States Congress to pursue and enact amendments to the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Conservation and Management ACT (16 USC §1801 et seq.) to ensure that the implementation of protections for Essential Fish Habitat do not unnecessarily restrict sand placement in intertidal or subtidal areas when such placement is for the primary purpose of conserving animals other than fish; and
2. The Virginia Marine Resources Commission to support limited subtidal or intertidal sand placement when sand placement is for the primary purpose of conservation of species other than fish.



**The Virginia 2020 Democratic Convention  
Supports Legislation to Protect Habitats of Native Birds**

**Whereas,**

A recent study published in the journal Science estimated that America's bird numbers have decreased by 29% since 1970. That decline represents a loss of nearly 3 billion birds in North America. By tradition and law, these birds are held by governments in trust for the people. The people of the United States and the Commonwealth of Virginia derive recreational, esthetic, cultural, utilitarian, and monetary benefits from these birds.

According to a study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, more than 100 million people engage in wildlife-dependent activities each year. Total wildlife-related recreational expenditures exceeded \$150 billion in 2016. Moreover, Virginia residents spend more than \$1 billion annually pursuing bird watching and other wildlife watching activities. In addition to the benefits these birds provide to people, many people believe that native birds have a right to exist.

Habitat loss and degradation is a key factor driving the loss of bird populations. Much of this habitat loss is caused by development conducted, funded by or authorized by the federal government and/or state governments.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention encourages:**

1. The United States Congress to pursue and enact legislation that prohibits any project funded, authorized, or built by the federal government, at a cost of \$1 million or more, to result in a net loss of more than 5 acres of native bird habitat. In the event that a project cannot be built without destroying 5 acres or more of habitat, the project may achieve the net loss target by purchasing other land of equivalent ecological value, or an irrevocable easement on such land. Costs associated with such purchase shall be considered part of the overall project costs; and
2. The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia to pursue and enact legislation that prohibits any project funded, authorized, or built by the state government, at a cost of \$1 million or more, to result in a net loss of more than 5 acres of native bird habitat. In the event that a project cannot be built without destroying 5 acres or more of habitat, the project may achieve the net loss target by purchasing other land of equivalent ecological value, or an irrevocable easement on such land. Costs associated with such purchase shall be considered part of the overall project costs.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Supports Electrification of Transportation for Climate Change Mitigation**

### **Whereas,**

The Trump administration has gutted existing regulations that would help meet the goals of the 2016 Paris Agreement on climate change mitigation through reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles. The administration has reduced the penalty for noncompliance with the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards and has reduced the required annual increase in fuel economy in the CAFE standards from 5.0% per year for model years from 2022 through 2026 to 1.5%. The administration has also attempted to preempt the California Zero Emissions Vehicle (ZEV) mandate, which has been adopted or is in the process of being adopted by 13 other states. While the Trump administration's changes will severely hurt the United States' ability to meet the requirements of the Paris Agreement, more aggressive, longer term changes, including a transition to 100% ZEVs, will be required to avoid the worst effects of climate change and meet or exceed the Paris Agreement goal of less than a 1.5 degree Celsius additional rise in global temperatures. These changes could be phased in for all classes of vehicles – cars; light, medium, and heavy-duty trucks; buses; and off-road vehicles; and performed by American workers in American factories.”

While the reversal of the Trump administration's regulatory attacks is essential, additional legislation is needed to ensure reduction and eventual elimination of pollution impacts from internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, including carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxide, and fine particulates. Unless legislation mandates restoring the penalties and fuel efficiency increases in CAFE, court cases could potentially be brought against the restored regulations. Programmatic legislative actions could assist start-up companies with promising new technologies that may reduce carbon emissions (via additional funding to the Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing (ATVM) loan program), allow and fund the installation of charging stations at Interstate Rest Areas (such stations are currently prohibited by 23 U.S.C 111), increase the gas tax to fund energy-efficient infrastructure, revise the Diesel Emissions Reductions Act (DERA) to require replacement of diesel vehicles with ZEVs, and create a federal version of the California Hybrid and Zero-Emission Truck and Bus Voucher Program (HVIP). Legislation at the federal and state levels could also speed the transition of school buses to ZEVs.

There are additional technical barriers to transitioning to ZEVs that will require additional research. As *The New York Times* has pointed out, “The real deal-killer [for ZEVs], especially for city and apartment dwellers, is a dearth of chargers where they park their cars.” Research is needed for efficient approaches to charging vehicles for multi-unit residences (about 40% of all residential units), improved batteries for vehicles, and matching electricity demand to time-of-day requirements with community photovoltaic electricity generation and storage and micro-grids.

Additional steps that could speed the transition to ZEVs include a “cash for guzzlers” program for inefficient ICE vehicles, grants to cities for transportation electrification plans, requiring taxis and ridesharing companies such as Uber and Lyft to use ZEVs, authorizing states to enter into regional “cap and invest” programs free of federal preemption threats, and creating a carbon-offset program for residual ICE vehicles.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Endorses federal regulations and regulatory revisions that would:
  1. Restore the penalty for noncompliance with the CAFE standards to \$14 per tenth of a mile per gallon;
  2. Reverse the purported preemption of the California ZEV mandate;
  3. Propose new CAFE standards that equal or exceed those promulgated by the Obama administration and reinstate or increase the multiplier incentives for electric vehicles; and
  4. Phase out non-ZEVs, resulting in 50% ZEV automobiles, light-duty trucks, and off-road vehicles by 2030 and 100% for all vehicles, including medium- and heavy-duty by 2040.
2. Endorses federal legislation that would:
  1. Amend the Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA) to clearly permit the regulatory changes listed above to avoid court challenges;
  2. Expand the Department of Energy (DOE) ATVM loan program;
  3. Amend 23 U.S.C. 111 to permit electric recharging stations and fund the installation and maintenance of such stations at all interstate rest areas;
  4. Increase the federal gas tax for transportation investments consistent with phasing in electric transportation;
  5. Revise the DERA program to fund only ZEVs as replacements for internal combustion engine vehicles as ZEVs become available for all classes of diesel vehicles;
  6. Increase DOE funding for battery research and manufacturing, including funding for research into community storage of locally generated photovoltaic electricity to allow residential recharging of ZEVs, particularly for multi-unit housing;
  7. Provide a national HVIP program based on the California model;
  8. Expand research and development for charging stations, batteries, and electricity storage, especially for multi-unit dwellings;
  9. Consider additional measures such as “cash for gas guzzlers,” grants for city transportation electrification plans, authorizing states to require ZEVs for taxis and ridesharing companies such as Uber and Lyft, authorizing state regional agreements to fund clean transportation, and carbon offsets for residual ICE vehicles.
3. Endorses Virginia legislation that would:
  1. Adopt the California ZEV mandate;
  2. Accelerate the Virginia program to convert school buses to ZEVs; and
  3. Provide grants for pilot efforts to develop integrated community systems of charging stations, photovoltaic electricity generation and storage, and micro-grid interconnection to the public utility system.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention**  
**Urges Protections for Liberties and Rights - Civil, Voting, and Human**

**Whereas,**

Civil liberties and rights, voting rights, and human rights are key elements of our democracy and are protected by the United States Constitution and a wide range of state laws and legal precedents. However, Republicans and the Trump administration have supported policies to reduce many of these rights, including voting rights, freedom of expression, reproductive rights, and other internationally recognized human rights. Since the early 2000's, Republican administrations and Republicans in Congress have pushed through laws, such as the Patriot Act, allowing mass surveillance of Americans, and even with a dismal success rate, many of these surveillance programs are still active today, nearly two decades later. And now, recent reports indicate that the Trump administration is using the coronavirus crisis as a pretext for implementing mass surveillance that uses smartphone location data. Given these developments, the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law has aptly noted that we must ensure that our "response to COVID-19 is evidence-based, time-limited, and reasonably balanced to maintain our civil liberties. If we allow this moment to entrench an unaccountable surveillance apparatus, we risk its presence as a fixture of our future." Any surveillance for contact tracing should be accountable, temporary, and well-supervised. To protect privacy rights, Sen. Ron Wyden has introduced *S.3242 - Safeguarding Americans' Private Records Act of 2020*, to amend the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978. Provisions are also needed to address the issue of vulnerable people in prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers to save lives and reduce the spread of the virus. Additionally, legislation is essential to stop Republican governors and state attorneys general who oppose abortion rights from using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to suspend or curtail reproductive rights, based on the argument that these are nonessential health care services that can be delayed.

Voting rights are established in the Constitution, including in the Fifteenth, Nineteenth, and Twenty-sixth amendments; and in state law, and by the "one man, one vote" principle established by the Supreme Court. Further, Congress, including Rep. Gerry Connolly and the other Virginia Democratic representatives passed *H.R.4 - Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA) of 2019*, and a companion bill is currently pending consideration in the Senate. However, Republicans and the Trump administration have promoted a wide range of policies aimed at voter marginalization through voter suppression and gerrymandering. Republicans recently forced Wisconsin voters to risk their lives to vote in their primary election on Tuesday, April 8, 2020, by prohibiting voter relief measures to make voting safer during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic. As Trump and Republicans wage a disinformation campaign against mail voting, nearly 80% of Americans want a mail ballot option this November. Based on such outrageous Republican voter suppression efforts in the face of overwhelming public demand for voting rights, and to protect public health during crises such as COVID-19, Congress should take immediate action to require all states to allow voting by mail, and overhaul our state voting systems so that they can process tens of millions of additional mail-in ballots. Additionally, polling places will need more resources, expanded early voting days and hours, larger locations, and sanitation supplies for poll workers and voters, to maintain safe and sanitized in-person voting.

The Trump administration and Republicans have recently attacked the First Amendment rights of Americans advancing a series of state and federal anti-protest laws aimed at civil rights protestors, and human rights and climate activists. There has also been a nationwide effort to pass federal and state anti-boycott laws which limit Americans' right to engage in peaceful boycott and divestment efforts aimed at supporting social justice and human rights. To protect freedom of expression, Congressional Democrats are sponsoring *H.Res.496 – Affirming that all Americans have the right to participate in boycotts in pursuit of civil and human rights at home and abroad, as protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution*. By contrast, Republicans are sponsoring *H.R.5595 – To impose additional prohibitions relating to foreign boycotts under Export Control Reform Act of 2018, and for other purposes* which would infringe on Americans' free speech rights. The ACLU has opposed these anti-free speech efforts and the federal courts have blocked unconstitutional laws in Arizona, Kansas, and Texas, that required government contractors to certify that they did not boycott certain vested foreign interests favored by Republicans.

The United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the foundational document of the modern human rights system. However, although we have provided global leadership on many human rights issues at times, our embrace of human rights has sometimes been partial and selective. For example, we are the only country in the world that has yet to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and we are also violating international human rights norms by continuing to apply the death penalty. Furthermore, the Trump administration and Republicans have threatened International Criminal Court (ICC) judges and prosecutors, have pulled out of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and have advanced xenophobic policies that defy international law. Recognizing that human rights are enshrined in the US Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution, we honor our founding principles by rigorously enforcing these rights domestically and abroad; and by assuming a leading role in international human rights conventions and organizations such as the UNCRC, the ICC, and the UNHRC.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** urges our elected officials to take actions, and introduce and pass legislation and resolutions that:

1. Protect and support civil liberties and rights, voting rights, and human rights for all;
2. Sunset Section 215 of the 2001 USA Patriot Act to end indiscriminate “bulk” collection of Americans’ telephone records; and prevent new unaccountable surveillance programs under the guise of fighting COVID-19;
3. Follow public health expert advice by addressing the issue of communities vulnerable to COVID-19 in immigrant detention, jails, and prisons, as an essential step in saving lives and stopping the spread of this pandemic;
4. Prevent Republicans from using the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext for prohibiting or curtailing reproductive health care;
5. Enact and fund a federal requirement that all states offer no-excuse mail-in absentee voting to every eligible voter;
6. Enact and fund a federal requirement that all states institute a minimum early in-person-voting period for 20 consecutive weekdays prior to elections, including at least one weekend;
7. Provide the necessary federal funding immediately to states, counties, and municipalities to ensure the primaries and elections can proceed safely during the pandemic without diminishing the fundamental right to vote;
8. Provide an additional \$3 million to the U.S. Election Assistance Commission for increased administration and additional state support;
9. Support the right of all Americans to participate in boycotts in pursuit of civil and human rights at home and abroad, as protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution;
10. Enact *H.Res.496 - Affirming that all Americans have the right to participate in boycotts in pursuit of civil and human rights at home and abroad, as protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution*;
11. Ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), including implementing the required criminal justice reforms that will end the mistreatment of American children by our criminal justice system;
12. Implement a national moratorium on the application of capital punishment as a legal penalty, and applaud the State of Colorado for becoming the 22<sup>nd</sup> state to repeal the death penalty in February 2020;
13. Support and join the International Criminal Court (ICC) to support international law and order, based on human rights, and liberty and justice for all;
14. Support and re-join the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC);
15. End the mass incarceration of Americans and immigrants and xenophobic policies that force immigrants into Mexican refugee camps, and prevent asylum seekers from receiving fair and timely asylum hearings;
16. Enact *S.3242 - Safeguarding Americans’ Private Records Act of 2020*; and
17. Enact *H.R. 4 - The Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2019* which has passed the House, with a veto-proof majority.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Calls for Amending the Virginia Constitution to  
Guarantee the Right to Reproductive Autonomy**

**Whereas,**

Targeted regulation of abortion providers (TRAP) laws are medically unnecessary regulations designed to make it more difficult for women to access abortion and to shut down reproductive health care clinics. Many of the regulations are absurd and have nothing to do with providing safer health care. Medical facilities are already regulated, and TRAP laws impose unfair requirements on abortion clinics that other medical providers are not subject to. In 2016, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt* that TRAP laws in Texas did not make patients safer and imposed an unconstitutional burden on abortion access. The goal of TRAP laws is to close clinics and make it difficult for women to obtain abortions. These restrictions are unconstitutional and put an undue burden on women seeking abortion services.

Until recently in Virginia TRAP laws impeded access to abortion and women's access to health care. The Virginia Assembly passed and Governor Northam in 2020 signed a law that removes longstanding regulations requiring abortion seekers to undergo an ultrasound at least 24 hours prior to receiving an abortion and to get counseling on alternatives to abortion. It also strikes the requirement that facilities providing more than five abortions per year be designated as hospitals. The measures also remove the requirement that only physicians provide abortions during the first trimester of pregnancy, which will expand the provider pool. In Virginia, women now have better access to safe, legal abortion and do not have to navigate undue restrictions. However, these laws could be reversed, and states can ban abortions during exigent circumstances. Texas has banned abortions due to the COVID pandemic and recently a court upheld this ban. Therefore, it is recommended to amend the Virginia Constitution by adding a section that guarantees the individual right to personal reproductive autonomy.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on Virginia Democratic General Assembly Members to support the following amendment to the Constitution of Virginia: *That an individual's right to personal reproductive autonomy is central to the enjoyment of life and liberty and shall not be denied or infringed upon unless justified by a compelling interest of the Commonwealth and achieved by the least restrictive means.*

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Supports LGBTQ+ Equality in Virginia**

### **Whereas,**

With newly secured Democratic leadership in the VA State Senate, House of Delegates, and continued support from the Governor's mansion, Virginia has finally been able to make significant progress towards the full and equal treatment of LGBT+ residents under the law. Recently passed Virginia Values Act S.B. 868 protects equal opportunity for housing, public and private employment, public spaces, and credit applications on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation. Recently passed S.B. 179 expands the definition of hate crime to cover victims based on gender expression and sexual orientation. Recently passed H.B. 386 bans conversion therapy of minors by health care providers and counselors. Virginia has also ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, a positive step for LGBTQ+ citizens as partnerships between people of the same sex are disproportionately affected by discrimination on the basis of sex.

While Virginia has made historic progress towards equality for LGBTQ+ residents, there are still several legal areas where discrimination resides. These include:

1. No legislation has been implemented in VA against the so-called "Gay- or Trans-Panic Defense", whereby the assault or murder of LGBTQ+ victims may be excused on the basis that the defendant allegedly found non-violent same-sex or trans sexual advances so offensive or frightening that they were provoked into reacting. Unlike neighboring MD and DC, no legislation against this discriminatory legal tactic has been introduced in VA.
2. Virginia permits state-licensed child welfare agencies to refuse to place and provide services to children and families, including LGBTQ+ people and same-sex couples. Legislation preventing this discriminatory behavior has not yet been passed but is addressed in H.B. 1051 introduced by Mark Levine.

Furthermore, over a dozen state legislatures across the US have introduced bills that would criminalize healthcare services that affirm the gender of transgender minors. Alabama House Bill 303 would have "prohibit[ed] the performance of a medical procedure or the prescription or issuance of medication, upon or to a minor child, that is intended to alter the minor child's gender or delay puberty." Alabama considers anyone under 19 years of age a minor. Violation would be considered a Class C felony, with punishment up to 10 years in prison. (N. Lang March 10, 2020) These kinds of egregious bills harm transgender minors by blocking their access to lifesaving, gender affirming care while also harming the medical community that serves them.

Roughly .6% of adults in the U.S. identify as transgender, and 1.8% of youth are estimated to be transgender. Transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive youth are a vulnerable population; in addition to experiencing many shared challenges with the transgender adult population, including lack of legal protections, poverty, harassment and stigma, anti-transgender violence, barriers to healthcare, and difficulty in updating legal documents, as minors they are subject to many additional restrictions, obstacles, and barriers in regards to transitioning socially, legally, and medically that their adult counterparts do not face. Because of this, the freedoms and benefits that transgender youth in supportive households receive, such as accessing gender affirming hormone therapy or puberty blockers, must be protected in order to ensure the well-being of this vulnerable population.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Commends:

- a. Virginia Democrats in the General Assembly for passing S.B. 868, S.B. 179, H.B. 386, and the Equal Rights Amendment; and
- b. Virginia Democrats in the General Assembly for passing H.B. 1051 which prevents adoption discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons

2. Urges:

- a. All Virginia representatives to reach out to LGBTQ+ residents to hear their concerns and issues, so that they may be incorporated into new legislation on an ongoing basis;
- b. The introduction and support of a Senate bill corresponding to H.B. 1051, and eventual signature by the Governor;
- c. State senators and delegates introduce and support legislation preventing the so called “Gay- and Trans-Panic Defense”, which may be similar to protections recently enacted in neighboring Maryland, MD H.B. 488; and
- d. Governor Ralph Northam to affirm that transgender troops may serve openly in the Virginia National Guard, Virginia Air National Guard, and Virginia Defense Force.

3. Calls on local, state, and federal governments to adopt a statement and support legislation upholding the importance of gender-affirming medical care for transgender minors, and to firmly oppose any proposed bills that would threaten transgender minors' access to gender-affirming medical care.



**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Enacting and Fully Funding Drug Courts Throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia**

**Whereas,**

Drug courts are specifically for persons with substance abuse disorders, and their existence is predicated on the belief that addicts are not criminals. These court programs offer individuals the opportunity to enter long-term drug treatment and agree to court supervision rather than receive a felony or misdemeanor charge. Drug courts emphasize long-term treatment recovery over punishment. Participants who successfully complete a drug court program can have their underlying criminal offenses dismissed or expunged. If a participant fails to complete, their case will be processed as it normally would in the traditional criminal justice system.

Over 3,000 drug courts operate within the United States. There are over 120,000 individuals treated annually in drug courts, which creates more than one billion in annual savings nationally. Drug Courts are operating with incredible success in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

A 78 page 2019 Virginia Supreme Court Annual Report signed by Karl R Hade summarizes that drug court would save over \$10.7 million in taxpayer dollars, increase the number of active participants and serve participants with severe substance abuse needs.

The 18.2-254.1. Drug Treatment Court Act General Assembly recognizes that there is a critical need in the Commonwealth for effective treatment programs that reduce the incidence of drug use, drug addiction, and family separation due to parental substance abuse. It is the intent of this to enhance public health by facilitating the creation of drug courts as means by which to accomplish this purpose.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention calls on:**

1. The Virginia Congressional delegation to introduce and support legislation enacting Drug Treatment Courts on the federal level; and
2. The State of Virginia to expand §18.2-254.1. Drug Treatment Court Act to cover the entirety of the Commonwealth of Virginia effective immediately for the welfare of the citizenry. (see chart for court dockets in Virginia that already have drug court).

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Urges Criminal Justice Reform and Reduction in Mass Incarceration**

### **Whereas,**

In the last month, our nation has witnessed the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and others whose lives ended as a result of institutional racism built into our criminal justice system and law enforcement.

Our country from the East and West Coast has been protesting for several weeks at the injustice of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and demanding accountability and transformation in how our criminal justice system operates.

Mass incarceration in Virginia causes intergenerational harm and trauma to families, destroys communities, and disproportionately impacts communities of color, particularly Black communities.

280,000 people are arrested each year in Virginia, over 18,000 of whom are under the age of 18, including some under the age of ten; and despite making up only 19% of Virginia's population, African Americans make up 42% of those arrested.

Nearly 60,000 individuals are incarcerated in jails and state prisons on any given night, many without a conviction, awaiting trial, and unable to afford bail.

Those who are convicted of a crime—or even just arrested—face many challenges upon leaving the criminal justice system, including enormous debt from fines and fees imposed on them; criminal records that make it harder to find a job, to secure housing, to qualify for student loans, and even to vote; and sometimes deportation consequences that tear apart families.

60,000 Virginians are on a supervised release program, which can be ordered for up to ten years, with violations even for traveling out of state or failing to find a job often resulting in additional time on probation or even jail time.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on:

1. The Virginia General Assembly to:

- a. End the use of money bail; as well as the imposition of court fees and fines on individuals who lack the ability to pay;
- b. Eliminate mandatory minimum sentences;
- c. Abolish the death penalty;
- d. Restore discretionary parole;
- e. Increase the age at which juveniles can be tried as adults, set a minimum age of criminal responsibility of at least ten years old; and
- f. Take steps to facilitate re-entry following incarceration such as banning discrimination in employment, housing, university admissions, and public services for those with criminal records; reforming expungement laws; amending the constitution to allow automatic voting rights restoration; and eliminating probation revocation for technical, non-criminal violations.

2. The Virginia Governor to make greater use of his power to commute sentences to release those serving excessive sentences who have demonstrated rehabilitation.

3. Localities to increase diversion opportunities, restorative justice programming, and treatment options that minimize court involvement and result in no prison time.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Urges Full Legalization of Cannabis**

**Whereas,**

Currently in the United States, cannabis is legal in 11 states and the District of Columbia. Evidence shows that marijuana legalization is working so far. States are saving money and protecting the public by comprehensively regulating marijuana for adult use. Arrests have plummeted in places with legal cannabis, which saves hundreds of millions of dollars for the taxpayer by not imprisoning thousands of nonviolent offenders. Despite conservative belief, youth marijuana use rates have remained the same in states that have legalized for users who are 21 and older. Roads have remained safe with no impacts on driving under the influence charges and overall sales and tax revenue in each state quickly exceeded initial estimates.

Cannabis legalization has exhibited benefits for the opioid crisis. Legal access to medical marijuana has been associated with a 23% reduction in opioid dependence or abuse-related hospitalizations and 15% fewer opioid treatment admissions. In states with medical marijuana access, overdose death rates are almost 25% lower than in states with no legal access to marijuana, and the reductions in overdose death rates strengthened over time.

Over the past decade, more than 133,000 people have been arrested in Virginia for suspected cannabis possession. Each year, there are about 10,000 first-time cannabis possession offenses that are convicted, which can result in loss of a job or a security clearance, suspension of federal student aid, difficulty obtaining housing, and issues with professional licensing and child custody disputes, all for simple non-violent cannabis possession. The majority of Virginians say they are in favor of outright legalization of recreational use, and we should work harder to legalize it to avoid these egregious punishments.

In the 2020 Session, HB 972/SB2 which decriminalized simple marijuana possession and provided for a civil penalty of no more than \$25 was passed.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention calls on:**

1. The Virginia Governor, Democratic State Senators, and Democratic Delegates to:
  - a. Introduce and support legislation to legalize recreational use of cannabis by adults at least 21 years of age;
  - b. Introduce and support legislation to redirect a portion of revenues raised from the sale of cannabis for investment in the communities disproportionately impacted by the war on marijuana;
  - c. Vacate and expunge records of all non-violent offenders arrested for cannabis possession immediately;
  - d. Conduct a study on establishing a publicly owned “cannabis bank” to hold money earned from the sale of recreational cannabis if it is to be legalized before the federal government has descheduled it; and
  
2. The Virginia Congressional Delegation to support legislation to deschedule cannabis, expunge cannabis-related non-violent convictions, remove obstacles to banks from servicing the cannabis industry, redirect a portion of tax revenues to reparations for communities disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs, regulate the cultivation of cannabis to prevent environmentally harmful plantation-based monocultures, and prevent big tobacco companies and large agricultural corporations from dominating the cannabis industry.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Urges Reform of the Virginia Correctional System**

### **Whereas,**

Virginia spends \$1.5 billion annually on its system of incarceration, yet conditions in Virginia's prisons and jails are severely lacking, inhibit rehabilitation, and put the health and safety of inmates at risk.

Many incarcerated people struggle with poverty, addiction, or mental health issues, and there is nearly a 4:1 chance that someone with a serious mental illness is in jail or prison, rather than a hospital.

Studies have shown solitary confinement can cause psychological and physical damage in as few as 10 days, and over 7,000 people are subjected to the practice per year in Virginia.

Visitation has been shown to decrease recidivism, but visitors of those incarcerated in Virginia face arbitrary and capricious policies such as dress codes, strip searches, and tampon restrictions that can cause them to be turned away after driving hours to visit their incarcerated loved one.

### **Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention calls on:**

1. The General Assembly and the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to exercise greater oversight over Virginia Department of Corrections policies with respect to the health, safety and welfare of those incarcerated, and policies related to visitation.
2. The General Assembly to end solitary confinement, also known as "restrictive housing."
3. The Virginia Department of Corrections to:
  - a. Ensure access to high-quality, trauma-informed health care in prisons and jails; to provide nutritious food and regular opportunities for exercise; and to establish and maintain reasonable heating and cooling standards in all correctional facilities;
  - b. Provide generous in-person visitation, without undue limitations and restrictions; to improve the quality of in-person visits by allowing visitors to have physical contact, providing space for children and parents to play together, and ensuring accessibility for families with disabilities; and provide access to free phone calls and video conferencing;
  - c. Pay fair wages to incarcerated individuals and make commissary items, educational materials, and clothing available at rates no higher than those available on the free market;
  - d. Explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, age, race, national origin, disability, religion, and sexual orientation and gender identity or expression; and to establish and maintain gender-responsive practices, including a ban on using physical restraints on pregnant people, and ensuring strip searches are conducted by staff of the incarcerated person's preferred gender and that they are never conducted on children; and
  - e. Eliminate Virginia's for-profit prison(s).

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Supports Federal Gun Safety Legislation**

### **Whereas,**

Gun violence has become a growing epidemic here in the United States. Since 2016, gun-related deaths have continued to rise despite efforts by common sense gun safety activist groups, such as Everytown for Gun Safety, Moms Demand Action, the Brady Group, Giffords, and the Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, to curb this growth. In 2019 alone, at least 39,429 people were killed by gun violence. A large portion of these were suicides, while others were both intentionally or unintentionally committed by others. More than 50% of women who were murdered, were done so at the hands of a spouse or intimate partner. In addition to these statistics, there were 418 mass shootings (up from 337 in 2018) and 31 mass murders.

We here in the Commonwealth of Virginia are all too familiar with these mass shootings having experienced the hardships of the shooting at Virginia Tech in 2007 and then more recently in Virginia Beach in 2019. After gaveling out of the 2019 Special Legislative Session after 90 seconds and gaining a Democratic Trifecta, the Virginia General Assembly passed gun safety legislation including measures to extend firearm prohibitions for those under protective orders, require citizens to report lost or stolen weapons, allow local governments to have more authority to enact gun laws in their localities, update protections to keep unsecured weapons out of the hands of children and teens and to create a "red flag law." However, the unintended consequence yielded a push from certain localities to create so-called "2nd Amendment sanctuary cities" in Virginia. While the Commonwealth of Virginia has made great strides in the wake of these massacres to take on Gun Violence Prevention, we still need action federally to deal with this widespread epidemic and to handle this push back from other localities.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Democratic Congressional delegation to:

1. Seek universal background checks on all transfers of firearms in the United States;
2. Pursue Extreme Risk Protection Orders, or Red Flag Law, to permit police or family to petition a state court to order the temporary removal of firearms from a person who may present danger to others or themselves;
3. Prohibit the purchasing or the transfer of firearms to individuals with a history of violent behavior and/or domestic abuse allegations, regardless of marital status;
4. Close the Gun Show Loophole in which many states don't require private sellers to perform background checks on gun purchases or transfers;
5. Strongly Regulating and/or prohibit the use of 3D printing technologies to manufacture plastic guns by non-licensed manufacturers creating "ghost guns", which create undetectable threats in public places;
6. Hold the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives accountable for gun industry oversight and call for stronger enforcement on gun manufacturers who mass produce weapons of war for public consumption;
7. Fully fund gun violence research to be conducted by the Center of Disease Control; and
8. Commit to pursuing heavier regulation on assault rifles and banning bump stocks that are both frequently used in mass shootings. These weapons would include those that fit the definition of "assault weapon" used in the The Public Safety and Recreational Firearms Use Protection Act or Federal Assault Weapons Ban (AWB of 1994 (HR 3355), which included specific semi-automatic

firearm models by name, and other semi-automatic firearms that possessed two or more from a set certain features:

- a. Semi-automatic rifles able to accept detachable magazines and two or more of the following:
  - i. Folding or telescoping stock
  - ii. Pistol grip
  - iii. Bayonet mount
  - iv. Flash hider or threaded barrel designed to accommodate one
  - v. Grenade launcher
- b. Semi-automatic pistols with detachable magazines and two or more of the following:
  - i. Magazine that attaches outside the pistol grip
  - ii. Threaded barrel to attach barrel extender, flash suppressor, handgrip, or suppressor
  - iii. Barrel shroud safety feature that prevents burns to the operator
  - iv. Unloaded weight of 50 oz (1.4 kg) or more
- c. A semi-automatic version of a fully automatic firearm.
- d. Semi-automatic shotguns with two or more of the following:
  - i. Folding or telescoping stock
  - ii. Pistol grip
  - iii. Detachable magazine.
  - iv.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Discourages the Future Use of Torture in Intelligence Gathering and  
Encourages the Release of the Full Report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence**

**Whereas,**

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Report regarding the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) Detention and Interrogation Program is a 6,700-page document that details the CIA's use of morally abhorrent and horrific acts of torture. Acts of torture described in the report include waterboarding to the point of inducing convulsion and vomiting, a practice that President Theodore Roosevelt witnessed in the Philippines and clearly branded as torture. One detainee was chained, partly unclothed, to a concrete floor and left to die of hypothermia. Others were stripped, hooded, bound with Mylar tape, given medically unnecessary rectal feedings, and dragged through corridors while being physically abused. The CIA placed detainees in ice water "baths" to induce hypothermia and threatened to sexually abuse or otherwise harm the family members of detainees.

The Report is the product of a multi-year investigation by the Senate Intelligence Committee conducted into the CIA's torture program. In addition to describing the immoral brutality of the program, it also shows that torture often failed to produce intelligence or produced false information. In a public response to the Report, CIA Director Brennan himself admitted that the CIA did not know whether torture had produced any useful intelligence. Further, the Report shows that the CIA repeatedly misled Congress, the President, and the Department of Justice about the extent, severity, and outcomes of the torture program. The entire program was developed and overseen by a pair of psychologists without any background in interrogation who were paid over 80 million dollars for their "expertise" and "results".

Most of the 6,700-page Torture Report is classified and has never been shared with the American people. Instead a 525-page Executive summary of the Intelligence Report was declassified (highly redacted) and released in 2014. The investigation into CIA torture had bipartisan support from the time it began through the release of the declassified summary. Republicans and Democrats alike were horrified by the brutality the CIA inflicted upon its prisoners.

President Trump has expressed an interest in torturing prisoners, in his words, "even if it doesn't work." Trump has also been on the record as saying, "Would I approve waterboarding? You bet your a\*\* I'd approve it...Does it work? Does torture work? And the answer was yes. Absolutely." We have a responsibility to ensure that our fellow citizens hear about both the brutality and ineffectiveness of the torture program, and that we make clear to our politicians that it was wrong. We will lose something irrecoverable if we allow torture to become accepted by our society.

After the Senate Intelligence Committee finished investigating the torture program, Senators John McCain and Dianne Feinstein led a bipartisan coalition of Senators to pass a law mandating that all CIA interrogations adhere to the humane standards in the Army Field Manual on Human Intelligence Collector Operations. The same law also provides the International Committee of the Red Cross access to all detainees.

The McCain-Feinstein law provides an important bulwark against the return of CIA torture. That being said, the current President supports the use of torture and his CIA Director, Gina Haspel, reportedly ran a secret CIA "black site" in Thailand where some of these abuses took place and facilitated the destruction of 92 videotapes of torture that occurred there. Congress should act to ensure that unethical lawyers don't again skew the law to allow for torture by releasing the full 6,000-page Torture Report, requiring that all interrogations be videotaped, and banning the use of contractors in interrogations.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on US Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine to continue their efforts to have the full, unredacted Intelligence Report released to the American public and strengthen protections against the use of torture to collect information from intelligence informants by requiring that all interrogations be videotaped and banning the use of contractors in interrogations.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Supports Electronic Privacy Protections for Americans**

### **Whereas,**

In the bill of rights, the Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution states: *The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.* Over 200 years ago, this amendment was written by authors who had no idea that in the new millennium, Americans' "papers and effects" would include electronic documents and virtual data and would be susceptible to seizure and misuse on an unimaginable scale. Further exacerbating this issue was the dissolution of the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) in 1995 by the new Republican majority in Congress, as the OTA had advised Congress on complex scientific and technical issues.

Robust electronic encryption is a prerequisite for the foundation to preserving the personal privacy of all Americans, as well as the security of sensitive documents of US businesses, and federal, state, and local governments. Encryption protects information from being read without a key, and should not have "backdoors", which can be used by bad actors. Beyond individual privacy and national security, encryption is also an important issue for US businesses, which sell American innovation globally, but are harmed by our government's co-opting of their products for the purposes of surveillance.

Beyond the issue protecting private data through encryption, there is also concern about the personal data collected by companies for advertising or business purposes. With the extensive amount of e-commerce and social media sites on the web comes the risk that companies can collect an extraordinarily detailed dataset on an individual. This extensive dataset puts individuals at risk for commercial or political manipulation, as seen in Cambridge Analytica and Russian influence in the 2016 presidential election.

Of additional concern is the increasing use and prevalence of facial recognition software and databases. Routine suspicionless facial recognition is fundamentally an encroachment on Americans' privacy, but also has led to racial profiling, including high inaccuracies in identifying African Americans. Furthermore, this data poses a national security risk as it could be hacked, especially in areas of Virginia near our nation's capital.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention urges:**

1. The Virginia congressional delegation to:
  - a. Oppose any legislation preventing robust electronic encryption, or which requires encryption "backdoors" (e.g. EARN IT, S.3398); and
  - b. Re-establish and fully fund the Office of Technology Assessment.
  
2. Virginia General Assembly members to introduce legislation to:
  - a. Introduce and support legislation to explicitly give Virginia residents the rights to see, delete, and prevent the sharing of all data businesses collect on them, similar to the California Consumer Privacy Act and the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation; and
  - b. Ban facial recognition use by the government (e.g. similar to that passed by San Francisco), and to require notice and consent for private use of facial recognition (e.g. similar to that of Illinois' Biometric Information Privacy Act).



## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Endorses Strengthening Ethics Agencies in Virginia**

### **Whereas,**

State ethics agencies enforce a variety of ethics laws and encourage ethical behavior by government officials and employees by adopting codes of conduct, conducting training programs, providing advisory opinions, and sanctioning misconduct. Robust enforcement by ethics agencies is crucial to provide a meaningful incentive to public officials to serve the public's interest, and not their personal interest. Transparency of enforcement is also critical as it enables public engagement and deters future wrongdoing. On a national level, HR1, the "For the People" bill, co-sponsored by all 7 democratic Representatives from Virginia, aims to set national standards which strengthen ethics rules for public servants.

Building a solid ethics regime requires improving both of these prongs: transparency and enforcement. State ethics agencies must enforce ethics rules and laws in a way that demonstrates a commitment to ethical government, and that sends a clear statement to elected and appointed public servants that unethical dealings will be swiftly and harshly dealt with. Additionally, they should be open and honest with the public by publishing an annual or biennial report that communicates all relevant enforcement information. By improving on both these fronts simultaneously, states can take a major step towards the goal of honest government.

In 2015, Virginia created three ethics agencies: the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council (Advisory Council), the Senate Ethics Advisory Panel and the House Ethics Advisory Panel. Unlike the majority of state ethics agencies, these bodies do not have the power to sanction violations of ethics rules. The Advisory Council cannot even investigate complaints.

Virginia's inadequate ethics regime is reflected in its showing in two recent reports by the Coalition for Integrity. The state scored in the bottom ten of the S.W.A.M.P. Index, an analysis of laws and regulations related to ethics issues. Virginia fared poorly due to its lack of ethics enforcement powers, lack of protections from removal of ethics agency members and weak financial disclosure laws. In a follow-up report on how ethics agencies enforce ethics rules, Virginia's lack of enforcement power among all three agencies precluded it from even being scored.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the General Assembly to:

1. Review all lessons learned/results from studies undertaken on ethics reform in the Commonwealth. Only if there is a gap in knowledge is there a need for another study; and
2. Champion ethics reform legislation in the 2021 General Assembly which builds on HB 2380, introduced in 2017, which lays out a robust investigative system, provides subpoena power and requires transparency of proceeding. A new bill should, however, look at a potential consolidation of ethics agencies, propose independence of the agency, clarify a clear complaint process, and allow sanctioning power.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Efforts to Impeach Attorney General William Barr**

**Whereas,**

Congress has the power to impeach the "president, the vice president and all civil officers of the United States" for treason, bribery and other high crimes and misdemeanors, according to Article 2 of the Constitution. That includes Cabinet members like the attorney general.

Calls for Barr's removal began after it was revealed that Special Counsel Mueller disagreed with his handling of Mueller's highly anticipated report. In late March of 2019, the special counsel wrote a letter to Barr in which he expressed frustration over how the attorney general had presented the key findings of the nearly two-year probe in a mere four-page summary. Barr also appears to have misled Congress during appearances on Capitol Hill in early April last year, a week after he received Mueller's letter.

According to Gerhardt, lying to or misleading Congress during testimony is "sufficiently serious" enough to warrant impeachment proceedings for an attorney general. Harvard Law professor Laurence Tribe told Newsweek that "Barr's manifestly misleading and obfuscatory testimony, whether or not impeachable, is certainly disqualifying for any attorney general. He really needs to resign"

In this regard Adam Schiff (Chair of the House Intelligence Committee) said during an appearance on *CBS This Morning* that "Look, there's no sugarcoating this: I think he should step down. It's hard, I think, for the country to have confidence in the top law enforcement official in the country if he's asked a direct question, as he was, and he gives a directly false answer."

The events since Barr's letter have incinerated whatever remains of his credibility. The famously tight-lipped Mueller team told several news outlets the letter had minimized Trump's culpability and evaded questions as to whether he had shared the Mueller report with the White House; and, it turns out, he's "had numerous conversations with White House lawyers which aided the president's legal team," the *New York Times* reports. Where Mueller intended to leave the job of judging Trump's obstruction of Justice conduct to Congress, Barr interposed his own judgment that Trump's behavior was excusable. Next to the president himself, the attorney general is the most crucial actor in the safeguarding of the rule of law. The Justice Department is an awesome force that holds the power to enable the ruling party to commit crimes with impunity, or to intimidate and smear the opposing party with the taint of criminality

Also, given the analysis of highly respected public figures such as former Attorney General Eric Holder (who had served under President Obama), writing in an op-ed on December 11, 2019 in *The Washington Post* who claimed William Barr is "unfit to be attorney general" for his "naked partisan[ship]", "attempts to vilify the president's critics", his attacks on the inspector general and his comments on ongoing investigations. - and former FBI director, CIA director and federal judge William Webster who wrote in a December 2019 opinion piece of "a dire threat to the rule of law in the country I love." Webster asserted that "the integrity of the institutions that protect our civil order are, tragically, under assault," writing that "aspersions cast upon [FBI employees] by the president and my longtime friend, Attorney General William P. Barr, are troubling in the extreme." Since 2005, Webster had served as the chair of the Homeland Security Advisory Council.

In contravariance to its constitutional duties; under Barr, the DOJ has defended Trump's refusal to comply with congressional subpoenas into his personal finances. It has even intervened on behalf of his former campaign chairman, convicted felon Paul Manafort, lobbying for him to receive special privileges behind bars.

Barr's Justice Department has now asked the court to dismiss its case, which arose out of Mueller's investigation, against former National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. The Department took this action although Flynn pleaded guilty to the charges against him and the facts underlying his plea are essentially uncontested. This unprecedented action further demonstrates Barr's unfitness for office.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention** calls on the Virginia Congressional Delegation to support efforts to impeach Attorney General William Barr.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Supports Reducing Big Money in Politics Through an Amendment to the U.S. Constitution  
And Enacting Campaign Finance Reform in Virginia**

**Whereas,**

Money from special interests which influence elections and public policies is flooding into our elections with large donors hiding behind our broken campaign finance system. The 2010 Citizens United ruling unleashed the power of big money and fueled the creation of super PACs, which empower the wealthiest donors, and the expansion of dark money through shadowy nonprofits that don't disclose their donors. This influence on our elections has only aggravated the "pay-to-play" reputation of Virginia where campaign finance laws are among the laxest in the country.

Because of the absence of campaign finance restrictions in Virginia, campaign spending has greatly increased. Also, special attention has been paid to swing states where the power and influence of huge donations can determine electoral outcomes. As one of these competitive states, in Virginia, the increase in election spending has been quite striking. In 2011, the Senate and House of Delegates' campaigns together raised \$68.7 million, whereas total contributions in 2019 jumped almost twofold to \$121.5 million with nearly \$25 million coming from outside the state.

Virginia is exceptional in our country in that legislators can raise as much campaign funding as they want and spend it on themselves. Yet eighty percent of voters, irrespective of political party, agree that money is undermining our democracy. This year should have been the year of campaign finance reform in Virginia, but when more than 10 campaign finance bills were introduced in this year's General Assembly, but these 10 were not passed, as they had not passed the year before as well.

Campaign finance reform is the most important issue of our time, as it is the root cause of a government that is no longer responsive to the people. The Citizens United ruling, combined with lax campaign finance laws in Virginia, presents a serious and direct threat to our nation's representative democracy. It also stands in direct contrast to Virginians' commitment to good government, civic and civil discourse, and broad participation in local decision-making.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Commends Representative Don Beyer, as well as Representatives Spanberger, Wexton, McEachin, Scott, Luria, and Connolly for co-sponsoring House Joint Resolution 2 (HJR2) which calls for an amendment to the Constitution of the United States related to authorizing campaign finance spending. We similarly thank Senators Kaine and Warner for supporting a Senate companion bill (SJR51). We additionally thank our Representatives for supporting HR1 "For the People Act" which addresses campaign spending including revising disclaimer requirements for political advertising;
2. Calls upon Virginia legislators in the General Assembly to prioritize and work vigorously to ensure passage of state-related campaign finance bills which limit campaign contributions, ban donations from public service corporations, improve transparency through the mandatory disclosure of donors, restrict personal use of contributions and allow localities to implement public financing of elections;
3. Urges these same legislators to sponsor a resolution which endorses an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to reverse *Citizens United*, stating that (a) corporations are not entitled to the constitutional protections or "rights" of natural persons; and that (b) money is not speech. By doing so, Virginia would be the 21<sup>st</sup> state to pass such a resolution; and
4. Encourages local cities and counties to adopt similar local resolutions which support state and national legislation authorizing election spending rules, thus reaffirming Virginia's commitment of a government for and by the people.

**The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention  
Reaffirms the Independence of the Democratic Party of Virginia from Outside Influences**

**Whereas,**

Millions of Virginians have been a part of the “blue wave” of making Virginia more open, accessible and inclusive, making our Commonwealth safer and our democracy stronger.

The 2019 Virginia legislative elections gave us the trifecta, by putting the State House and Senate under Democratic control, enabling both to work with the Northam Administration and provide swift immediate progress on a number of important issues.

This force of progress is has led to passage of voting rights legislation, common sense gun laws, minimum wage increase, environmental protections, including (RGGI), repeal of onerous restrictions on a woman’s ability to make health care decisions, civil rights safeguards for the LGBTQ+ community, and much more, making for a fairer and more equal Virginia.

Many organizations have sought to participate in the political process through donations or support through other means, with the understanding that that support was incumbent on the recipient making pledges to support or oppose certain issues, or to take actions amicable to the donor.

Virginia has elections every year and the Democratic Party of Virginia (DPVA) works to recruit and assist candidates up and down the ballot, and because campaigns need engaged volunteers and activists as well as financial support to deliver their message, especially in these challenging times, the Democratic Party of Virginia wants to make unequivocally clear that no donation will be accepted that comes with any hint of a “quid pro quo”.

The DPVA works hard to maintain the trust and integrity of the Virginia electorate, especially during the most important election of our lifetime, the 2020 Presidential election.

**Therefore, be it resolved,** the convention reaffirms DPVA’s commitment that any donation tied to a specific threat, demand or hint of “quid pro quo” will be a non-starter and not accepted.

## **The 2020 Virginia Democratic Convention Rejects the Virginia Redistricting Commission Constitutional Amendment**

### **Whereas,**

Political gerrymandering is a substantial problem harming representational democracy throughout the United States; and within the Commonwealth of Virginia, lines for General Assembly and congressional seats have frequently been drawn to steeply favor the political party in power and to protect its incumbents—to the detriment of voters.

The Democratic National Committee has long opposed in its party platform the act of gerrymandering and partisan redistricting as a result of its impact in skewing the country's political landscape.

Gerrymandering has often been used to disadvantage and harm people of color by minimizing (or negating) their political strength which obstruct efforts to address community issues of interest.

Gerrymandering results in expensive legal challenges to minimize its harmful effects; for example, Virginia taxpayers recently spent millions of dollars defending the rights of vulnerable communities against what federal courts determined was racial gerrymandering.

Virginia has a long history with partisan redistricting, the Democratic Party of Virginia strongly opposes gerrymandering and strongly supports legislation—and a proper constitutional amendment—that would restrict gerrymandering to the maximum extent possible (if not eliminate the practice entirely).

For many years, numerous Virginia Democratic General Assembly members have led the fight against gerrymandering by, among other things, introducing anti-gerrymandering legislation, including bills to create an independent commission to perform redistricting every 10 years, and by working to build support for such reform efforts (which have been consistently opposed by members of the Republican party).

On February 23, 2019, the Virginia General Assembly passed a proposed constitutional amendment, Senate Joint Resolution No. 306, that would create a "Redistricting Commission" empowered to perform the decennial reapportionment of voters; under Article XII of the Virginia Constitution, the General Assembly must again consider and pass the same amendment language during the 2020 legislative session before that proposed amendment can be submitted to the voters during the November 2020 general election. For the 2020 session, the amendment is numbered "SJ18" (the constitutional amendment).

The constitutional amendment does not include any anti-gerrymandering restrictions and, instead, creates a permanent (constitutional) commission to redistrict the Commonwealth pursuant to "enabling" or "criteria" legislation that passed—but may be changed in the future— by the General Assembly.

The constitutional amendment (SJ18) rejects the nonpartisan or independent approaches to redistricting pursued in previous Democratic legislative efforts and as supported by most anti-gerrymandering reformers and, instead, proposes a bi-partisan commission comprised of eight currently serving politicians (members of the General Assembly) and eight citizens put forward by legislators, to draw and agree on legislative maps.

The proposed amendment's super-majority requirements would give two Republican legislator-members an absolute right to reject (or veto) the commission's maps for Virginia's House of Delegates or Senate, and the amendment would allow any three Republican legislator- Members to veto commission maps for Virginia's seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

If members of the proposed commission fail to agree on maps (including as a result of a veto, as discussed above), SJ18 removes popularly elected representatives from any further involvement in the redistricting process and states that “the districts shall be established by the Supreme Court of Virginia.”

Members of the Virginia Supreme Court have no institutional expertise in performing the redistricting function (e.g., drawing and approving political legislative district maps); in addition, a majority of the current members of that Court were appointed by General Assemblies controlled by Republicans elected based on maps that the federal courts have held were unconstitutionally gerrymandered to disempower communities of color and minimize Democratic Representation.

There are concerns that under the commission structure created by the constitutional amendment (SJ18), Republican commission members could veto maps, the Virginia Supreme Court could then “establish” legislative maps favoring Republican candidates, and future Republican office holders could appoint Republicans to the Supreme Court, resulting in the loss of the Democratic the majority in the House of Delegates as early as 2021 and the Senate by 2023—and potentially resulting in Democrats being unable to retake the majority in either body despite representing a substantial and growing majority of Virginia’s population.

**Therefore, be it resolved, the Convention:**

1. Strongly supports non- partisan or independent anti-gerrymandering reforms and urges all Virginians to oppose the constitutional amendment that will appear on the November 2020 general election ballot and would permanently cement a partisan commission in the constitution;
2. To ensure broad awareness among voters of the dilution of Democratic voting power that will occur as a result of the constitutional amendment, will encourage all local democratic committees to include opposition to the constitutional amendment on its general election sample ballot; and
3. Urges all Virginians to vote NO on the constitutional amendment and commits to support and continue work towards genuine nonpartisan or an independent redistricting process that prohibits gerrymandering and will be implemented for the 2021 redistricting process.