

Monroe County Green Party

Draft of platform for County elections, 2002

I. Social Justice

A. Living wage

B. Reduce corporate welfare

1. Tighten rules for issuing tax abatements

Tax abatements should directly correspond with the amount of benefit to the community. For instance, if a business proposes adding 15 new jobs, then a fair abatement would be to waive or lower the payroll taxes for that business. Such an abatement would be on a sliding scale depending on how many jobs were created. Abatements will be provided only for new hires, and those new positions must be retained for the life of the abatement. New hires that are terminated will lead to a rebate of the abatement. The main purpose of abatements will be to encourage employers to retain and train workers.

2. Make developers pay for infrastructure

Developers should pay the cost of roads, sewer extensions, electricity lines, and other infrastructure needed due to the development. This should also extend to the cost of new or expanded schools for new residential developments.

C. Encourage development/upkeep of low-income housing

1. Make a distinction between "low income housing" and "affordable housing," recognizing that "affordable housing" is NOT affordable for low-income families. Make "low income housing" the criterium for public funding.

2. Involve the county trustees in the process of providing "low income housing"

3. Require transit services to be available to all tenants of housing that receives public subsidies as soon as the habitants occupy the unit.

4. Undertake a survey of the location and condition of "low income housing."

D. Provide equal funding for public defenders as for prosecutors

Two ideas: Make pay for public defenders equal to pay for prosecutors, or at least provide free access to public facilities for public defenders. For instance, if a test would help determine the innocence of a client the police labs would provide the testing for free.

E. Workers' rights

Our main concern here is to make sure public employees have the right to organize. For example, recently the MCCSC attempted to regulate which unions the school bus drivers could join.

F. Tenants' rights

1. Pass a tenant's (and landlord's) rights ordinance like the city has. This would have to be enforced with residential building inspections.

2. Provide new renters and homeowners with a guidebook or pamphlet that would provide useful information to these individuals, such as the brochure the City's HAND department provides. For example, some landlords try to add extra charges, such as an additional damage deposit from a sublessor, even though they are not mentioned in the lease. Tenants should be made aware of their rights.

G. Public accountability

Under this heading, we would like to emphasize that a private company must be as responsible as a state entity in the use of public funds. For example, a private business that receives public subsidies must be required to follow the same disclosure laws as the local government itself. (This needs more discussion.)

H. Desegregation (by social class and race) of public schools

The county's public school systems, although not officially segregated, seem to send certain types of students to certain schools, not always corresponding to geographic location. For example, the at-risk students seem to all be sent to certain westside schools (was it Fairview?).

I. Establishment of a public health care system

1. Encourage the development of a county-wide healthcare program (This needs more discussion.)
2. Encourage the hospital to provide a "sick child day care" for a reasonable fee. This would allow a parent to use their limited sick days for themselves rather than for their children's illnesses.

J. End police profiling based on race or how a person looks otherwise

This issue came up because it is evident that looking like a pothead has led the police to hassle people downtown. We also feel that Monroe County is not immune to the national problem of racial profiling.

Action: Examine training and orientation programs of the sheriff's department and make sure they discourage such profiling.

K. Improve conditions at the county jail

1. Reduce overcrowding by setting lower bail levels for nonviolent crime and focusing less effort on jailing nonviolent offenders.
2. Allow breastfeeding in jail and in court when the incarcerated person is mother of a young child.
3. Reduce credit card surcharges for bail payments.
4. Reduce phone charges from the jail to a reasonable amount.
5. Support Drug Court, which keeps nonviolent drug offenders out of jail.

II. Grassroots democracy

A. End public funding of the BEDC

1. End the annual county contribution to the BEDC.
2. Instead ask that the BEDC report and present their findings to the current county Economic Development Committee.
3. Seek diverse input to economic decision-making.

B. Ensure that all districts have high-quality voting machines

C. Increase the diversity of viewpoints on county boards and commissions

1. Reconsider how commission vacancies are filled.
2. Publicize commission vacancies widely, perhaps even with active recruitment.
3. Make sure the structure of committees allows for third party representatives, not just republicrats.

D. Improve access to government

1. Strive for more accessible meeting times for government meetings
2. Create a Citizens' Academy program at the county level
3. Publish a County voter guide for every election that is mailed to every registered voter
4. Improve the County Web site, i.e. remove bad links and wrong email listings, increase amount of information.

E. Better coordination between city and county governments (especially planning!)

F. Increase county government autonomy

Lobby for change in state law to allow county to determine its own tax rate and levy.

III. Ecological Wisdom

A. Preserve green space

1. Buy the development rights from farmers to reduce the pressure on them to sell.
2. Work with the Sycamore Land Trust to buy rural land before it is developed.
3. Create and enforce a tree preservation ordinance.
4. Require that new utilities be placed under roads to minimize the amount of land which must be dug up. (This is currently in the Ellettsville Comprehensive Plan.)
5. Support Brian O'Neill's efforts to conduct a greenspace inventory of the county.

B. Challenge the paradigm of growth: There is no such thing as sustainable growth!

C. Encourage the use of alternative fuels and conserve energy

1. Look into the use of solar power (eg: install solar panels on public buildings)
2. Support and perhaps expand the Rural Transit.
3. Encourage the Rural Transit to purchase fuel-efficient or alternative-fuel powered buses in the future.
4. Keep options open for a light-rail system and investigate these options.

D. Oppose new terrain route for I-69

E. Support recycling

1. Explore the expansion of recycling and reuse programs.
For instance: plastic or styrofoam "peanuts" used in packaging are often simply tossed in the trash. Perhaps we could wash those "plastic peanuts" that do not dissolve in water and sell these recycled peanuts to local packaging stores.
2. Encourage businesses which process recycled goods
3. Use recycled paper for mulch in county landscaping

F. Encourage use of locally grown produce wherever possible in county government.

Examples could include school lunch programs or in the jail

IV. Nonviolence

A. Domestic violence prevention

1. Improve the record-keeping and search capabilities on domestic violence offenders.
2. Create a new program of Domestic Violence Intensive Supervision, which would include electronic monitoring of offenders with proximity warning to the victims. See <http://www.sierrawireless.com/news/protech.html>
<http://www.apbnews.com/cjprofessionals/behindthebadge/1999/11/11/emonitoring.pdf>
3. Investigate training procedures for sheriff's deputies in the sphere of domestic violence and improve if necessary.

B. Improve police/community relations

1. Have a fair or picnic to provide a meeting between the two seemingly alien cultures: the police (sheriff's department) and everyone else.
2. Incorporate nonviolent conflict resolution education in such a fair.

C. Encourage productive, positive youth activities

D. Encourage youth crime prevention programs

1. Support existing programs in our community such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys and Girls Clubs.
2. Look into starting a county program if current programs are lacking.