Green Party of Michigan – 2020 Platform

This platform shows how the Green Party of Michigan (GPMI) translates its values into practical policies on major issues. We update it every major election year, and we ask our candidates to support the positions in it. It's not a comprehensive document; new issues emerge and old ones become critical as events and campaigns develop. For the latest information, please visit our website MIGreenParty.org and our Facebook group Green Party of Michigan/Partido Verde Michigan, read our news, and check out our candidates.

The issues in this platform are not isolated from each other. For example, changing to a sustainable energy economy will eliminate many fossil-fuel jobs; people who have these jobs – and those who profit on their work – will object. Today, losing your job means a crisis which might ruin your life and destroy your family. But we can make what's good for the planet work better for people. Single-payer universal health care can protect us better than job-dependent health insurance. Guaranteed income can help families stay in their homes and lives. Tuition-free education and training can help people learn new skills for a new job. Will we learn to use other tools than violence to resolve conflicts? Will we learn to live within the limits of the natural world, or go on destroying our environment? It's up to us.

The Ten Key Values of the Green Party of Michigan

Ecological Wisdom: GPMI recognizes that the land does not belong to us; we belong to the land. Everything is interconnected and interdependent. All of nature, including humanity, is worthy of respect and freedom from exploitation.

Social Justice: GPMI wants to replace the worldwide system of poverty and injustice with a world free of all oppression based on class, gender, race, citizenship, age, or sexual orientation.

Grassroots Democracy: GPMI believes in direct participation by all people in the environmental, political, and economic decisions that affect their lives. In practice, we make decisions by voluntary consensus whenever possible.

Non-Violence: GPMI opposes the culture of violence. We promote non-violent resolution of international and domestic conflicts, and work toward lasting community and world peace.

Decentralization: GPMI supports a restructuring of social, political, and economic institutions away from a system which is controlled by (and mostly benefits) the powerful few to a democratic, less bureaucratic system.

Community-Based Economics: GPMI seeks an economics based upon the natural limits of the Earth which meets the basic needs of everyone on the planet. We value people over profits, when the two conflict.

Feminism: GPMI acknowledges the importance of both men and women and their unique capacities. Both sexes are critical to creating a healthy, sustainable society. We actively promote cooperation and participation to further our goals.

Respect for Diversity: GPMI believes it is important to value cultural, ethnic, racial, sexual, religious, and spiritual diversity, and to promote the development of respectful relationships across these lines.

Personal and Global Responsibility: GPMI demonstrates a commitment to global sustainability and international justice through political solidarity and in personal lifestyles of self-sufficiency. We believe in the slogan “Think globally, act locally.”

Future Focus/Sustainability: GPMI sees a need to counterbalance the drive for short-term profits by keeping development, technology, and fiscal policies responsible to future generations.

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Resource Wars

Today, wars are largely about controlling the world’s limited and diminishing reserves of fossil fuels, farmland, and other resources. Unless we change course, tomorrow’s wars will be the same. These are wars nobody can win. War cannot restore depleted resources; rather, it uses them up faster. We must use and recycle resources peacefully and effectively.

All the non-renewable energy sources on which our industrial civilization depends – petroleum, coal, natural gas, uranium for nuclear power – will run out in a century or less if we keep using them as fast as possible. Today, our machines depend on fossil fuels for about 85% of their energy. As the availability of those fuels declines, the machines must stop and become useless. Energy per capita has been declining for at least three decades, and the rate of decline is increasing. We should understand these facts, and adapt to them.

GPMI opposes wars for oil, wrongly glorified as wars against terrorism. Like Bush and Obama, Trump attacks legitimate, non-violent opposition to his policies as support for “terrorism”. We have supported impeachment of all three for this reason.

GPMI opposes individual terrorism – and state terrorism, authorities using force and violence for political purposes. This includes US “Shock and Awe” bombings and drone strikes; Israel’s oppression of Palestinians by walls, settlements, and one-sided wars; unpunished killings by police, as in Benton Harbor; and the threat that anyone can be accused of terrorism (or the “treason” of whistleblowing), stripped of rights, and sent to Guantanamo or assassinated. GPMI calls for repeal of the “Patriot Act” and similar violations of human rights.

We should get US troops and drones out of all countries. Military aid, and all foreign aid supporting state terrorism, props up a US Empire which threatens our security and ideals, and should not exist. We support a boycott, divestment, and sanctions against the Israeli government until it stops denying Palestinian history, ends the occupation, ceases discrimination against Palestinians under Israeli control, and lets displaced Palestinian refugees return to their homes.

We need to drastically reduce use of imported energy – by reducing energy use generally, not increasing extraction of extreme energy from tar sands, methane hydrate, and shale. Bringing the troops home would be a good start; the US armed forces are now our largest single consumer of energy. Conservation and efficiency will also help. We support putting millions to work rebuilding cities with walkable neighborhoods, public transportation, and community gardens – and rebuilding the countryside with low-energy farming for local consumption.

A fossil-fuel carbon fee-and-dividend system, with all fees returned in equal shares to the people of the United States, would reduce energy use generally while giving the poorest households the means to cope with higher prices for energy. That would help us get ahead of fuel depletion and cut carbon-dioxide emissions at the same time. Higher Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards for vehicles are good, but insufficient.

GPMI supports developing truly renewable energy: wind, geothermal, and solar power, not industrial biofuels. We should require energy-efficiency standards for all new buildings and encourage retrofitting of existing buildings. Annual energy audits for all government facilities and programs should become part of the annual budget process.

If you believe the twin wastes of war and conspicuous consumption make us and our world poorer . . . you’re already Green.

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Jobs and the General Welfare

In the US, the link between economic growth and prosperity has been broken for 40 years. Real wages have been flat or falling. Unwinnable wars have taken more and more of our dwindling resources. The economy was bad in the 2008 financial crisis – and for the 99% it's gotten worse. Nobody has a secure job, secure health care, or a secure pension. No community has a secure future. In short, business and politics as usual are failing us.

Democrats, Republicans, and the Federal Reserve System only stimulate the economy from above. They bail out banks and promote the stock market, but they cut programs that help people – like education, public safety, social services, and environmental protection. No matter what the corporate-funded parties say, the purpose of government is not economic growth – it is ensuring the general welfare. If the economy needs stimulating, we should stimulate it from the bottom up. For instance, a real jobs program would hire people directly to do useful public works, as the WPA did in the 1930s.

We reject weakening Social Security or Medicare. Removing the cap on income taxed for Social Security would keep the system fully funded, without cutting benefits or raising the retirement age. (More jobs would be available if full-retirement age were back down to 65.) And we must not let Wall Street profit off our retirement by privatizing Social Security.

We support a fair, simple, and progressive tax code. We should tax all types of income the same – wages, interest, capital gains, dividends – and cut loopholes and exemptions. There should be no tax on income below the poverty level, and a higher Earned Income Credit. Top-bracket tax rates for millionaires should rise to 80%.

Health care should be a right for all, not a privilege reserved for those who can pay. Single-payer universal health care, or “Improved Medicare for All”, can cover everyone and save hundreds of billions annually (out of insurance-company profits). And programs like VA and Workers’ Compensation must continue to provide their other protections to the people.

We support making Michigan a no-recourse state. This means that, if a family’s house is foreclosed on, the foreclosures would entirely settle the mortgage debt. We should also require proof in court before a foreclosure proceeds, and impose a moratorium on home foreclosures and utility shutoffs when unemployment is high.

We should end the War on the Poor and repair our shredded social safety nets. All work should pay a fair, living wage – and unemployment benefits should last as long as unemployment lasts. We support good public education for all, funded fairly – and free, at least up to a bachelor’s degree or the equivalent in training for a trade – and forgiving college loans entirely, or at least making them dischargeable in bankruptcy like other debts.

We support a full transition of our financial system from a private for-profit system to a public for-care system, with the exclusive power to create and direct the use of money for public purpose as its first use. This would fund health care, education, climate needs, energy, transportation, localized food production, and infrastructure. A full 25% of all new money created would go to states and municipalities on a per capita basis for them to determine its use, and tax-free loans would be made available to states and municipalities. Private banks would no longer create money issued as debt for the speculative economy.

If you support these fair, common-sense measures to promote the general welfare and restore the social and economic dignity of jobs for all . . . you’re already Green.

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Democracy and Human Rights

At its founding, this nation declared all people had unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Especially since the PATRIOT Act, the government has claimed great power over us and shown no respect for our rights. Candidates from “both” major parties have shown their unity by ignoring the spirit of the Declaration and the letter of the Constitution. People who have committed no crimes are arrested, jailed, even killed. Powerful people and institutions commit fraud, perjury, and worse with no penalty. But we the people have a right to alter or abolish government that no longer works for us. We need a strong and persistent popular movement to regain “liberty and justice for all.”

GPMI wants to give the majority of voters who lack enthusiasm for both Democrats and Republicans something to vote for. If you’re disenchanted with politics as usual, you don’t have to sit on the sidelines and you don’t have to waste your vote on either corporate party’s candidates. If enough of us register our protest at the ballot box by voting Green, we’ll actually see change start – instead of just hoping for it and being disappointed.

GPMI is firmly on the side of rights for people, not for corporations. We support amending the US Constitution to overrule the Supreme Court, which invented corporate “personhood” long before its 2010 Citizens United decision blocked controls on corporate donations for advertising during election campaigns. We back any amendments that say corporations are not people with Constitutional rights – and money is not speech.

No human should be denied rights based on race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other discriminatory category. GPMI strongly supports the rights outlined in the US Bill of Rights and the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights – for all humans, including immigrants in this country, and refugees around the world. We support First Nations’ struggles for full tribal sovereignty, land reform, and honoring of treaties – as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and the world indigenous movement working to protect the Earth from industrialism. Women need to have the right, and the practical ability, to choose abortion – and health care covering that choice.

We also seek to end the influence of money in politics. Democracy should express the will of the people through a “one person, one vote” process. Public financing, free airtime for all legally qualified candidates, and true non-partisan redistricting (or proportional representation where appropriate) would make ballot access meaningful. Other reforms include a ban on political ads for the two weeks before elections and a ban on corporate donations to politicians, parties, PACs, or lobbyists.

GPMI has many ideas on election reform and democratic government. For example, taxpayer-funded primary elections should be eliminated. They cost us all millions, and marginalize alternative political parties. Let each party set up and pay for the process by which it selects candidates. The people can judge if their methods are fair and democratic. We could require legislators to spend 26 weeks a year in their districts, and hear from all their constituents instead of seeing only other politicians and lobbyists.

Votes belong to voters – not parties or candidates. Voter power depends on guarding each voter’s right and ability to cast informed votes free from long lines or other pressures. Ranked Choice Voting lets voters list their full preferences among candidates, not settle for one “lesser evil”. Paper ballots (counted by human beings instead of machines), election audits, voting holidays, and other reforms can help all votes count – and be counted.
We reject the national security secrecy culture that has corrupted our government. From Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden we know how far beyond Constitutional limits the US police state is. GPMI calls for immediate repeal of the PATRIOT Act, which intelligence agencies abuse to claim excessive powers of surveillance and investigation. We demand real transparency in government – no more secret budgets, secret prisons, unwarranted data searches, or prisoner abuse. To end such atrocities, we must curtail secrecy and police power and restore the rule of law.

GPMI also supports Net Neutrality, which keeps anyone from controlling the Internet with restrictions on content, platforms, transmission speed, or equipment. If FCC and courts will not enforce this democratic concept under current law, we call for new laws to make sure people have fair and equal access to online information – and to each other, to share it.

We would stop Michigan getting Fs from the Center for Public Integrity. Governor Snyder promised transparency in 2013; what we got was more influence for secret money in elections and doubled fat-cat contribution limits (redoubled by a law that also limited public talk on ballot issues). This followed a “Right-to-Work” law, taking abortion out of standard insurance coverage and the decision on wolf-hunting away from the voters, re-animating the Emergency Manager law after voters rejected it, and more acts of contempt for the will of the people. GPMI would repeal these acts, end “referendum-proofing”, and ban fracking.

GPMI would work to end prison-system injustices, including the “new Jim Crow” and the financial incentives set up by prison privatization and the “War on Drugs.” The US leads the world in percentage of citizens in prison, most for non-violent drug offenses. A disproportionate number are blacks and Hispanics due to racial profiling, though drug-use rates are evenly spread across racial/ethnic lines. We would “ban the box” to ease hiring discrimination against those with records. We should also expunge marijuana-related convictions, democratize the now-legal growing and sale of marijuana, regulate any uses proven hazardous, and get jobs and other benefits from industrial hemp.

We believe that Black Lives Matter, so we support democratic control of local police and other law-enforcement officers (LEOs) and agencies. One way is to make sure any legitimate proceeds of LEO seizures go into a government’s general fund; this would stop a LEO agency from becoming a self-financing entity outside the budget control of elected officials – and help prevent corruption. We also support elected Citizen Control Boards to oversee law enforcement – with the power to fire LEOs, limit special rights given by LEO contracts, and start prosecution of criminal acts even if other authorities reject accountability.

Utilities and other essential community services should be in the hands of the community, not privatized for corporate profits. Local governments should support time banks, transition towns, community gardens, and similar non-profit organizations which build their communities. GPMI also supports community involvement in schools and literacy programs as well as shelters for battered women, men, and children. Training in non-violent conflict resolution should be a regular school program – for students and parents.

Workplace democracy would enable workers and managers to implement and use democratic principles. Adults and students should both get training and practice in the tools and methods of democracy and justice: voting systems, due process, debates, and non-violent conflict resolution such as mediation and arbitration.

If you believe that democracy at all levels should mean that decisions affecting the lives of the people are made by the people and for the people . . . you're already Green.

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The Environment

Some politicians talk of “balancing” economic and environmental goals. Others want to end all environmental protection. Both are wrong. Sacrificing the environment in the name of jobs and growth is short-sighted. It threatens our long-term survival. What we need is an ecologically sustainable economy which protects our environment. We must create a wiser relationship with the natural world, ending the fossil fuel economy in order to limit and eventually reverse climate change and ocean acidification.

Clean, accessible water is a fundamental human right and a public trust. That right and trust were violated in Flint (lead poisoning) and Detroit (mass water shutoffs instead of an affordable water plan). We should ban hydraulic fracturing, which pollutes the water supply. We should revoke the sulfide-mining permit for the Eagle mine, which will drain acid into the Yellow Dog Watershed and Lake Superior. We oppose Canada’s proposed nuclear waste dump on the shores of Lake Huron.

We must develop renewable energy such as wind and solar power, in Michigan and nationwide – clean power creating local jobs – and reduce energy use generally. As the Fukushima disaster shows, nuclear power poses long-term risks to all life on Earth. GPMI opposes new nuclear plants, and calls for phasing out existing reactors. Fossil fuels bring their own disasters, including the Enbridge pipeline break in Marshall. GPMI also opposes offshore oil drilling, Enbridge’s pipeline over the Straits of Mackinac, tar-sands oil, and coal.

Michigan’s renewable electricity requirement should be much higher than 10%. Michigan can economically generate electricity from wind power in many areas. We have much more sunshine than Germany – which generated almost 40% of its electricity from renewable sources in 2019, without using any nuclear power. Solar panels work well in Michigan at any scale, large or small, and the cost is approximately the same as electricity from the power grid. Sunlight is also useful for direct and hot-water heating of well-designed buildings. Still, we should not make rural areas bear the impacts of power production for big cities. GPMI supports decentralized power generation when feasible – and giving local communities power to decide whether or not to accept large energy projects in their areas.

GPMI supports sustainable, long-term road repair/maintenance funding and building a good network of efficient public transportation while minimizing use of destructive road salt. With any fuel, our internal-combustion engines pump carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Efficiency helps, but we still need to do less driving and less flying.

GPMI opposes concentrated animal feeding operations, factory farms, GMOs, and suburban sprawl. We support revitalization of rural communities and small-scale, organic agriculture as remedies for unsustainable, petrochemical-dependent agribusiness. Our rich legacy of forests and lakes has a value beyond timber or tourist dollars. We should halt over-logging on state forests, provide more non-motorized lakes and campgrounds, outlaw wolf hunting, work to set aside more wilderness areas, and protect more of our Great Lakes shorelines from development.

Building a sustainable society that enhances the environment instead of degrading it will be a lot of work – plenty of jobs for Michigan’s people for decades to come. But we need peace, democracy, and social justice to get there. If you agree . . . you’re already Green.

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