## Platform of the Green Party of Arkansas

### 2014

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Preamble

The Green Party of Arkansas has adopted the Ten Key Values of the Green Party of the United States as its basic operating philosophy and endeavors to apply these principals to guide our policy positions on every issue, whether that issue is local, state, national, or international. The Ten Key Values are: Democracy, Social Justice, Environmental Wisdom, Non-Violence, Decentralization, Community Based Economics, Gender Equality, Respect for Diversity, Personal Responsibility, and Future Focus.

The Green Party of Arkansas (GPA) is an open political party with no barriers of any kind to those who wish to participate. We seek to improve the political life of the State of Arkansas and the United States of America by participating in the elections and offering candidates for office at every level who will espouse and promote a progressive political agenda on the campaign trail and in office.

Our party is not satisfied with business as usual, is not satisfied with seeing bad candidates elected to office while consoling ourselves that their alternatives were worse. We will advocate directly our positions on justice, equality before the law, the protection of the environment, and the freedom of the individual. Politicians who craft their positions by reading the polls have no place in the Green Party of Arkansas. That path that has been taken by other parties, we will have no part of it. Courage is required in every endeavor, and the path of the reformers of bad policy and the pioneers of new policy is difficult. Courage and selfless dedication to the principals of a progressive political agenda are absolutely required.

The Green Party of Arkansas holds that enhancing the well-being of all the members of society - in this country as well as around the world - is the only proper role of government. We reject the seeking of hegemony over other people and other nations. We reject granting unfair advantages to the wealthy - often based on the false theory that doing so is helpful everyone else. We reject the theory that corporations, or any non-human entity, can be considered as a “citizen” – only flesh and blood human beings can be citizens and only they are rightfully accorded the rights and protections enshrined in the U S Constitution. Creations of humans are not human, and the creations of humans are only useful when they serve the needs and legitimate desires of humans. We reject government that responds only to the desires of the wealthy and the powerful.

We believe in allowing the maximum freedom of the individual that is consistent with the rights of society at large. However, we recognize that with rights come responsibilities, and we accept that in some cases the rights of the individual must be regulated to protect those of society. Finally, we also believe that all life on Earth, our only home, also has rights, and that to deny those natural rights that belong to all living things is to deny to ourselves and our posterity the benefits that come to us by virtue of living on a healthy planet where all living things are
respected and cared for. The future of our children and our species depends absolutely on the care that we exercise in managing our environment and the wisdom that we show in preserving the health of the Earth.

The Environment and Energy Policy

Currently, the entire planet is threatened as never before by the burning of fossil fuel. Climate Change, or Global Warming, is a real phenomenon caused by the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The future of the entire world is in serious danger and the real possibility of a climate catastrophe is increasing every year. The Green Party of Arkansas favors the only realistic path that offers a chance to reduce and eventually to eliminate carbon emissions – a tax on carbon. However, the GPA also recognizes that the burden of such a tax should not be placed on those of our society who are already struggling to survive in economic conditions that are arduous and unfair, and therefore we advocate a carbon tax that provides rebates on a sliding scale to those citizens at the middle and bottom of the income ladder. Such a carbon tax must be enacted at the federal level.

Energy policy must also be radically revised. The goal must be to stop burning carbon, unless a way can be found to do so without emitting carbon into the atmosphere. Because no such method exists at this time, it is imperative that the world begin immediately to put more resources into methods of producing energy that are not only safe, but do not release carbon dioxide. Solar and wind are well-know methods of producing energy that do not emit carbon. However they are not the only alternatives, for example, hydroelectric power does not emit carbon. Energy policy must also be put in place that reduces the waste of energy that is also contributing to the problem. We must begin to shift our attitudes on exactly what we think it means to “live the good life”. We must find a way of living that does not rob our children and grandchildren of a future on this single planet, the Earth, our only home.

The Green Party of Arkansas does not endorse the use of nuclear power as a solution to the problem of climate change. Whereas it is true that nuclear power does not emit carbon into the atmosphere, it is also true that nuclear power is inherently unsafe, and that when a nuclear power plant goes wrong, catastrophic and permanent damage is done to the environment. The most recent accident at the Fukushima power plant in Japan is still threatening the people of Japan and the world with the continuing release of deadly radioactive material.

The Green Party of Arkansas also recognizes that there are other examples of pollution – such as the waste from factory farms. The permitting of a factory hog farm in the Buffalo River watershed is a glaring example of the type of stupidity that threatens not only a treasure of the State of Arkansas, but also a national treasure and a place that is special to the whole world.
The Green Party of Arkansas calls for new state laws to prevent a repetition of the permitting of the hog farm, laws that will eliminate any water pollution anywhere in the Buffalo River watershed. GPA also calls for strengthening the laws of the State of Arkansas that are to protect the environment, and to create new environmental protection laws where they are needed.

Health Care, Social Security and the Social Safety Net

Health care is now, and always has been, a human right. To deny that health care is a human right is to say that some people have no right to live, an immoral proposition. The Green Party of Arkansas endorses National Health Insurance for every person in America. We believe that the Affordable Care Act is a step in the right direction, however, it remains to be seen if the ACA will control the ever increasing cost of health care in America. We will be happy if it does, but if as we suspect, it does not, then the only alternative is National Health Insurance.

The GPA also supports the existing system of Social Security, a very successful program that has, in combination with personal savings, provided millions of Americans with a decent retirement and has alleviated the burdens of caring for the elderly. Without Social Security, every family in America would have to struggle to care for their elder loved ones. GPA opposes cuts to the Social Security system, and believes that the system must be protected. Social Security is not charity or welfare – people who have worked all of their lives and paid into the system deserve to receive the benefits of the retirement system. Without Social Security, old people would be living under bridges, and starving, and those of us who are not old would have to be spending our own scarce resources to take care of our parents. Social Security is a benefit to us all and must be protected.

The Green Party of Arkansas supports the social safety net – a collection of programs and services that are provided only to those who have the greatest need. The Food Stamp program is currently under attack and cuts in the Food Stamp program are being passed and advocated by those who are so selfish and cruel as to not care if children starve. The attacks on the Food Stamp program are shameful, and wrong. The Green Party of Arkansas calls for the continuation of the Food Stamp program, opposes any cuts to the program and advocates for the extension and expansion of the program, especially in times of economic distress such as during the current economic recession.

We support the unemployment insurance program, and advocate for extending its benefits to those who have been unable to find a job.

The preamble to the United States Constitution contains the phrase “to provide for the common welfare”. Concern and care for all of the people of this country is, and always has
been, the proper task of government at all levels in America. The Green Party of Arkansas supports the social safety net, opposes attacks on it, and advocates strengthening it.

**Tax Policy**

The Green Party of Arkansas supports a progressive income tax as the only fair way to raise the revenue that is required to run the federal government, and opposes sales taxes, and every regressive tax. A progressive tax is one that places a heavier burden on those most able to pay and a regressive tax places a heavier burden on those least able to pay. All sales taxes are regressive by their very nature. In fact, a graduated, progressive income tax is the only practical method of raising enough money to fund the government. It has always been true that the poor cannot pay enough in tax to run the government, and in the current massively unequal system, it should be obvious that a progressive income tax is not only fair, but absolutely necessary to avoid running massive budget deficits which in the long run are not healthy for the economy. The Green Party of Arkansas supports fiscal responsibility and a reasonably balanced budget over a period of time. For this goal to be met, we must restore the tax brackets to the rates that were in place before the Bush tax cuts of the early 2000’s, we must restore the inheritance tax on estates in excess of two million dollars, and we must find new sources of revenue that are justified.

The recent financial catastrophe – the effects of which are still with us – were caused by a lack of regulation of the investment banking industry. The Green Party of Arkansas calls for a tax on Wall Street transactions sufficient to supply the deficits caused by the 2008 depression. We further call for increased regulation of the investment banking industry, a renewal of the Glass-Steagel act, and a special tax on excessive Wall Street bonuses and salaries.

**Criminal Justice**

In any discussion of criminal justice in America, the issue of the death penalty must be addressed. The practice of executing prisoners is barbaric and wrong and must be stopped. The continuation of the death penalty in America shames our country in the eyes of the world. The Green Party of Arkansas opposes the death penalty in each and every case regardless of the crime. There are many reasons for opposing the death penalty, too many to be given here in the party platform, however, it is a fact that it is unnecessary for the protection of the public, and that makes the penalty morally wrong.

The criminal justice system must be reformed from top to bottom. The Green Party of Arkansas advocates the examination of the disparity in the sentencing of whites versus non-whites in our
state system as well as in the federal system. Where such disparities exist, they must be rectified, and the GPA advocates sentence reductions for persons who have been punished more harshly than others who have committed the same offense. Our state, as well as our nation, must examine the effects that the punishment of offenders has on everyone, victims, criminals and non-victims. We as a state and as a nation are spending too much money to over-incarcerate people who are no threat to the public safety. The draconian sentencing of minor offenders is harmful to everyone and must be stopped.

The Green Party of Arkansas opposes excessive prison sentences, and calls for the expanded use of alternative methods of dealing with non-violent offenders, including house arrest and restitution to victims. Violent offenders such as murderers, rapists and violent thieves, must be imprisoned for the safety of the public, and economic criminals should be punished by being required to return to the victims and the public the money that was stolen or extorted.

Any discussion of the criminal justice system in America must also address the so-called “war on drugs”. It is interesting that every problem that the government wants to deal with in ways that will assault our civil liberties and overturn protections against unwarranted governmental power are couched in terms of a “war”. The Green Party of Arkansas recognizes that the drug laws in this country have filled the prisons of our nation with people who do not need to be there to protect public safety. The GPA advocates de-criminalizing the way our system deals with possession of small amounts of illegal drugs, reducing the sentences of addicts and changing from a punishment system to a medical system. Addicts need treatment and education. Sending drug offenders to prison is simply a waste of money.

Finally, there are some prohibitions which themselves are more harmful to society than the behavior they intend to discourage. The marijuana laws are long overdue for repeal. The GPA calls for federal action to be taken to eliminate the federal laws against the use of marijuana, thereby allowing the states to decide if they wish to legalize and regulate the production, sale, and use of marijuana without the interference of the Federal government.

**Reproductive Rights and Gender Equality**

An abortion is not a happy event. No one says to themselves “When I grow up, I’m going to have an abortion”. Abortion is not what anyone thinks is a good thing, however it is not the business of the government to interfere in the very personal decision concerning the health and family of a pregnant woman. It is simply none of the government’s business to make such decisions for anyone. For those who think that abortion is wrong, they are free to not have an abortion. The Green Party of Arkansas supports the decision of the Supreme Court in its 1973 ruling Roe vs Wade, and the party opposes the overly restrictive laws passed in the recent
Arkansas legislature. We call for those laws to be repealed, and if they are not repealed, we are confident that they will be struck down by the federal court system.

Gender equality is a goal that the Green Party of Arkansas supports. Men and women have differences according to their physical natures, however we are all morally equal, we are all human beings and there is no justification for discrimination against any person based on their gender. Therefore, the Green Party of Arkansas supports the Equal Rights Amendment, and calls for the Arkansas legislature to ratify the amendment. We also call for equal pay for equal work, and we support the role of women in the military in any capacity that they are capable of filling.

Any discussion of Gender Equality must also deal with the issue of sexuality. The Green Party of Arkansas views homosexuality both as a condition of birth for some people, and as a legitimate choice for others. We support equality for gays, lesbians, intersexed persons and transsexuals, and believe that a person has the right to choose for themselves the style of their personality and how they wish to dress and live, and should be able to follow their hearts and desires in this area without discrimination by society.

**Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

The Green Party of Arkansas supports civil rights for every person in America. It is wrong to discriminate against anyone based on their race, their gender, their sexual orientation, their religion or lack of religion, their nationality, their disability, their age, their marital status, their political opinions, or on any basis other than the “content of their character”.

One of the prime violations of basic civil rights in Arkansas and America today is the prohibition of marriage for gay and lesbian citizens. Just ten years ago there was a reaction against gay marriage across America as some people felt threatened by the realization that there is no justification for the second class citizenship imposed on our gay brothers and sisters. Arkansas passed an amendment declaring that marriage is only for a man and a woman. The Green Party of Arkansas opposed that law then, and we oppose it now. All across the nation, anti-gay marriage laws are being struck down and repealed, and we call for the Arkansas marriage amendment to be repealed, and failing that, we look forward to the day when the law will be invalidated by action in the federal court.

Civil liberties are the essence of freedom. Without civil liberties, we will all be living in a totalitarian society, unable to legally advocate for those changes in our nation that we believe are necessary. By virtue of the U S Constitution and the successful defense of our nation by millions of soldiers and citizens over more than two centuries, all Americans have legally protected civil liberties. This means that we have the right to speak out, to run for public office,
to protest against the government, against policy, against businesses, against laws. These civil liberties are precious and are not to be infringed. So long as we enjoy legally protected civil liberties, we can advocate for change peacefully. Without civil liberties only a violent revolution will serve to correct injustice in our society, and violence is often the progenitor of even worse injustice.

Currently the most dangerous violation of the civil liberties of every American is the assertion by the President of the United States, Barack Obama, that he has the legal authority to execute American citizens without trial. No more dangerous, outrageous, immoral and wrong policy can possibly be conceived than that of summary execution. The President no doubt believes that he is “protecting” us. He is wrong, he is in fact attacking America at the core. What would a different president do with such power?

The claim that the President can order any American to be killed, without trial, without a defense, without evidence, in secret, and without independent review, is ridiculous, dangerous, and wrong. In the case of an American citizen is acting against the country, serving the cause of an enemy, alternatives to summary execution do exist, for example, they can be tried in absentia, declared an enemy and dealt with as such, but the bald and unsupported assertion of the President that he can kill anyone he wishes, in secret, for any reason he comes up with, and no one can do anything about it, must be denounced as an attack on the civil rights of every American.

**National Security and Military Policy**

The Green Party of Arkansas recognizes the necessity of providing for the military defense of the country. The world has not yet transformed itself into that happy condition that all moral mankind desires – world peace and the permanent abolition of war. Unless and until the nations of the world collectively and decisively reject war, the United States of America must have the means by which it can defend itself. Nevertheless, the USA is not currently contributing to the cause of world peace. Our nation continues a policy of massive military spending, all out of proportion to our need for self defense. Our country currently spends more on our military than the next ten top spending countries combined.

To see that much of this huge military spending is not related to a rational estimation of our need for defense, it is only necessary to note that our Congress has appropriated huge sums of money to fund weapon systems which the Pentagon itself has stated it does not want, or need. The damage to our country by the dangerous immoral wastage of gigantic quantities of resources on our military is little noted or calculated, but is felt by every taxpayer, by every hungry child, it is felt by our crumbling infrastructure, and by the risk of economic ruin brought
on by crushing budget deficits. The Green Party of Arkansas calls for a program – taken over a period of time – of serious and meaningful reduction in military spending.

Further, we call for the continued reduction – with the goal to reach zero – of our nuclear forces. The Green Party of Arkansas calls for the United States of America to adopt the principal of avoidance of war as the cornerstone of our foreign policy. Claims that this has always been our policy are false and are easily dismissed as such when a little reflection on our recent history is taken into account. The war in Iraq was unnecessary, aggressive, illegal, stupid, wasteful and immoral and cannot be justified on any basis.

While calling for significant and on-going reductions in military spending, the Green Party of Arkansas also condemns the culture of violence and the glorification of war which is endemic in our culture. When the cult of the military has reached the stage in a free society of being effectively immune from criticism, the shadows of fascism are not far behind.

The Green Party of Arkansas makes a distinction between those Americans who serve in the armed forces and the leaders and politicians who order them into war. It is the height of hypocrisy for jingoistic politicians to urge war and to extol the virtues of military action on the one hand while voting to cut services to our military veterans on the other. The Green Party of Arkansas calls for fully funding all military retirements on the original basis on which they were offered – anything less is a fraud on the very people who were called on to make enormous sacrifices. The Green Party of Arkansas supports increased funding of the Veterans Administration, we call for the transference of savings from reduced military spending on foreign bases, weapons systems and nuclear forces to go to increased services to our veterans.

The so-called “war on terror” is a misnomer. There is no “war” on terror, this is a phrase that was invented by the George W. Bush administration in order to gain the support of a populace accustomed to agree to anything as long as it is claimed to be in support of a war. A “war on terror” is simply a phrase that has been used to justify the dismantling of our civil liberties as evidenced by the attempt to institute indefinite detention without trial, to justify execution without trial, to legalize the torture of prisoners, to maintain Orwellian surveillance of the American people. In short the “war on terror” is phrase designed to institute the beginnings of a police state in America. The Green Party of Arkansas condemns and opposes the curtailment and destruction of our civil liberties under the guise of a so-called “war” on terrorism.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the fundamental basis for our existence. The success of agriculture in providing abundant supplies of food for the world has been so great that we in modern America have
taken it for granted. If the destruction of the climate of the Earth continues on its current path, we may very soon begin to have reason to pay more attention to agriculture.

The Green Party of Arkansas supports providing a safety net for farmers as in the Farm Bill, and we call for that bill to be passed in Congress without including in it cuts to the Food Stamp program. Cutting the Food Stamp program, especially in the current economic climate of recession, is unconscionable and cruel, and unworthy of a great nation.

Consistent with our support for local economy, the Green Party of Arkansas supports the local food industry—Farmer’s Markets are an excellent way for the public to gain access to locally produced food, supporting many local farmers. The local food market has several advantages, among them being that the cost of the food does not include the environmental cost of more carbon pollution through the transportation of the food from distant places. We call for government at all levels to take note of the local food industry and to find ways to support and encourage its expansion.

The subject of genetically modified organisms, GMO’s, is producing plenty of controversy. Consumers have the right to know which foods contain GMO’s and the GPA supports a federal law requiring the labeling of food products to identify which products contain GMO ingredients.

**Education**

The Green Party of Arkansas believes that education is the foundation of freedom and democracy. An uneducated populace cannot meaningfully participate in democratic processes because ignorant people cannot understand the issues on which they are expected to vote. The presumption of the theory of democracy is that people will vote in their own interest; however they cannot do this if they cannot form an educated opinion of what is in their interest. Ignorant people are easy prey for the demagogue, for the fascist, the religious fanatic, and the war monger, and they are especially vulnerable to the lies of the factory bosses and the propaganda of the ultra-rich.

The Green Party of Arkansas supports public education, and calls for an increase in the funding for public education. Further, we call for an increase in the funding for higher education, both at the state and the national level. No young person who is capable and desirous of obtaining a higher education should be unable to do so because of lack of financial support. The Green Party of Arkansas calls for the federal government to investigate the causes of the increase in college tuition with a view to find ways to reduce or eliminate them, and to institute means by which every capable student is financially able to obtain a higher education.
The Green Party of Arkansas opposes any attempt by the government to fund non-public education. Public education is the cornerstone of a free, diverse and tolerant society and should not be undercut. While the GPA does not oppose non-public education, we believe that such education should not be supported by tax payer dollars.

**Religious Freedom**

One of our greatest freedoms in America is the freedom of religion. The founders of our country had recent memories of the dangers of religious government. Anyone who cares to learn can find in history books the accounts of the horrors of wars of religion in Europe, and the oppression of people based on religious differences that have occurred in all times and in all places. It should not be supposed that these wars, horrors and oppressions are all in the distant past. Hitler executed 6 million people based on their religion. Most recently, in Myanmar, the Muslims of some villages were attacked and massacred by the Buddhists of other villages.

In order to spare our nation from these terrible events, so common in human history, the people of our country specifically separated religion from government – they did so by insisting on, and ratifying, the first amendment to the U S Constitution which says that the government shall not “establish a religion”. This means that no governmental entity in America, at any level, may engage in the promotion of religion. Furthermore, it means that no person in America is required to belong to any specific religion, and that not having any religion cannot legally be the basis of discrimination.

For the person who is religious, this is the very essence of their security that they will not be subjected to oppression because of their religion. By refusing to any religion the ability to control the government, religious freedom for everyone is preserved. There are those who would like to have the government of the United States adopt Christianity as the official religion of the country – believing that religious freedom applies only to the innumerable varieties of Christian faith. They would, if they had their way, instantly find that the battle would then have to move from Christian vs non-Christian to Protestant vs Catholic, and then from Baptist vs Methodist and on and on until one day there is a war – based on religious differences.

The Green Party of Arkansas supports religious freedom, and therefore we oppose prayer in public schools, when lead by teachers or administrators, and we oppose laws and regulations that are based on religious arguments or religious teachings and texts, such as for example, the Bible. The Green Party of Arkansas also objects to the portion of the Constitution of the State of Arkansas which states that an atheist cannot be a candidate for public office and that the testimony of an atheist is not valid in an Arkansas court. This discriminatory language is a violation of the U S Constitution and should have been removed long ago.
Finally, religious freedom does not allow the prejudiced members of any religion the right to discriminate against anyone. There are people who wish to use a religious excuse to justify their own practice of discrimination against gay people in the workplace and in the marketplace. For the government to legalize or allow such discrimination would in itself be “establishing a religion”, a clear violation of the first amendment.

**Immigration Reform**

America is a nation of immigrants. Over the vast majority of the planet, people are either immigrants or the descendants of immigrants. In the North and South American continents only the Native Americans are not the descendants of relatively recent immigration. Native Americans arrived here about 13,000 years ago, perhaps longer, and everyone else’s ancestors arrived a mere five hundred years ago at most. The recent uproar over the presence of immigrants from south of the U. S. border is largely based on racism and prejudice.

Reaction against immigrants in our country has occurred at various times in the past – and in each and every case was the result of prejudice rather than a reaction to any actual harm. There was a time when signs in store fronts advertising for new hires also said “no Irish need apply”. In the west there was paranoia over the so-called “yellow peril”. Discriminatory laws aimed against immigrants have been passed throughout American history – and been eventually struck down as unconstitutional.

While it may be true that immigration laws are necessary, they must be applied with care and humanity, and they must also be liberalized to match the actual economic situation. The fact is that immigration occurs whenever and wherever there is economic opportunity, and when that opportunity ceases, immigration ceases. For those who despise the presence of foreigners in our country, the best and only remedy for their perceived problem would be an economic depression so terrible that no one would want to live in our country.

The Green Party of Arkansas supports the Dream Act that would allow the children of undocumented immigrants to become citizens after living in this country for a set amount of time. The Green Party of Arkansas recognizes that people who come to America to find economic opportunity are modern day examples of the same type of person who came to this country the previous four centuries. We believe that immigrants are good for our nation, and we believe that they should be welcome. The Green Party of Arkansas opposes the separation of families through the deportation process and calls for a halt to the practice. Finally, the Green Party of Arkansas calls for a large increase in the number of immigrants that are legally allowed to live in the US so that the problem of “illegal” immigration is reduced to a manageable level.
Election Reform

The two party “system” of politics in America is not working for the nation. The constant battling between the Republicans and Democrats, the refusal of the Republicans to compromise with the Democrats, the use by the Democrats of opinion polls to craft their positions rather than to stand on principals has hurt the state and the country. In light of the damage inflicted by the two-party political industrial complex, it is long past time to reform the barriers to the ballot created by the ballot access laws and the vote test laws. These laws were passed in Arkansas in fairly recent times and they have only one purpose – to eliminate competition for the two major parties. They therefore have the effect of stifling innovation, of dumbing down the level of the public debate, and cheating the voting populace of a decent education during the political campaigns.

The Green Party of Arkansas calls for the reduction of barriers to the ballot by reducing the number of signatures required to gain ballot access for a new party from the current 10,000 to 5,000, and altering the vote test from achieving 3% of the vote in either a presidential or a governor’s race to achieving 2% in any state-wide election. The current requirements are onerous, and relieving this burden on the creation of new parties will allow new parties to participate in the electoral process, produce new candidates, and will lead to more vigorous debate and serve the public far better than the current system.

The Green Party of Arkansas opposes the new voter identification requirements instituted by the Arkansas legislature in 2013. These laws fix a so-called problem which doesn’t exist, and the real purpose of the new voter laws is to restrict access to polls. Valid voters, mostly poor and elderly, and women, will be disproportionately, and adversely, affected. This is of course the real reason for the laws, as the Republicans believe that this type of person typically votes for the Democratic Party.

The Green Party of Arkansas also calls for the institution of instant runoff voting in Arkansas for all elections. The State of Arkansas wastes millions of dollars every year funding run-off elections which would be eliminated if the state were to use instant run-off elections. Instant run-off elections also allow the campaigns of more than two candidates to be handled easily and efficiently.

Labor

It is through the action of labor that virtually everything that is necessary to survival and to enjoyment of life is produced. However, labor is produced only by human beings, not by
corporations, not by banks, or legislatures or Congress. Working people are the main spring of our nation and yet they are curiously forgotten in our modern political discussions. The Green Party of Arkansas supports labor, and particularly, the GPA supports organized labor – labor unions. The Green Party of Arkansas calls for the adoption of laws that will promote the increase in labor unions, and calls for the repeal of the so-called “right to work law” – which more properly might be called the “right to work for less” law.

Unemployment insurance is a vital necessity for millions of the long term unemployed, and the GPA supports continuing the payments until the labor participation rate is restored to pre-recession levels. Further, the GPA calls for the government to create jobs on its own, as was done during the great depression. The fact that so many people are out of work is not a reflection of a lack of need for work to be done. For the unemployed young people we should institute programs similar to the Civilian Conservation Core that was so successful during the great depression.

The need for a revolution in the way this nation produces and uses energy also offers opportunity for the government to provide employment. The Green Party of Arkansas calls for the creation of “Green Jobs” – jobs created directly or indirectly by the federal government that are aimed at improving the environment and reducing the total amount of carbon that is entering the atmosphere. There is work to be done, and we have the ability to do it, it only remains for the government to harness the power of the millions of unemployed Americans and apply that power to an ever increasing and urgent need to reduce and eliminate the environmental threat to our planet.

**Economic Opportunity and Economic Equality**

Economic opportunity in America is shrinking. That this is true can be discovered by anyone with enough interest to examine the economic data. The recession of 2008 only exacerbated a trend that was already underway long before the great recession. Put simply, directly due to the rise of conservative political power in America, fueled by massive amounts of propaganda, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, while the middle class shrinks. Recently reported information details these facts in stark statistics. While the wealthy are more wealthy than ever before in history, wages are flat and declining while inflation slowly eats away at the real buying power of the average American, eroding our quality of life, all the while medical costs soar.

This is not the place to go into mind numbing statistics and data, the facts are available. What is necessary is to confront the truth – conservative politics is ruining America and destroying the American dream. Since 1980, the nation’s lawmakers have steadily granted more and more
advantages to the wealthy class – all the while justifying their actions by claiming that doing so helped everyone else. The falsity of the claim is now apparent and provable. The conservative economic agenda is the only real agenda of the Republican Party, its conservative “social” agenda is only used to gather votes from the ignorant in service of the wealthy.

The GPA calls for action to reverse the damage done to the protections that used to exist for the purpose of preventing the conversion of America into a peasant society where only a few people have essentially all the wealth and power. First the minimum wage must be immediately increased to levels that allow a family of four to be supported on a single full time job. The Green Party of Arkansas believes that the depression of the buying power of average Americans only makes the economy worse, and therefore to improve the economy we must start by increasing the buying power of everyone.

The entire concept of a “minimum” wage must be replaced in everyone’s minds by the “living” wage. According to the MIT website, a living wage for a family of two adults and two children in Arkansas is $17.44 per hour, a poverty wage is $8.80 per hour and the minimum wage is $7.25 per hour. GPA calls for the minimum wage to be replaced in Arkansas by a living wage, and that living wage to be periodically altered to account for changing economic conditions.

The GPA calls for a reform of the tax laws to return to the federal government enough revenue to balance the budget every year and this can be done by restoring the tax rates on the highest earners to the levels that existed before the Bush and Reagan tax cuts and by reducing expenses on the military. Further, laws that shield massive amounts of income from taxes must be reformed; inheritance taxes must also be restored to previous levels and increased to prevent the accumulation of such huge quantities of wealth that the economy is damaged through the effects of excessive inequality.

And these proposals are only the beginning of what must be done to protect the American way of life. Economic studies should be undertaken immediately to provide recommendations on ways to reduce the extreme and dangerous income inequality that exists in America, and those recommendations must be put into practice.