

# RURAL NEBRASKA BILL OF RIGHTS

Nebraska agriculture is facing a crisis. For five straight years, average producers -- farmers and ranchers -- have not made a profit.

Unfair practices by big corporations, rising interest rates, scarce loans, abuses of eminent domain and shrinking markets all have reduced income for individual operators and for rural communities.

Accordingly, the Nebraska Democratic Party's Rural Caucus will work toward:

**1. PROPERTY TAX RELIEF:** Agricultural land should be taxed on the basis of its annual ability to earn income and not on the basis of fluctuating market values for land.

**2. OPEN MARKETS:** Competition must be restored in the markets to buy seed, fertilizer and supplies and to sell crops and livestock. Vertical integration hurts local markets. Country-of-origin labeling puts control back in the hands of producers.

**3. LOCAL FOOD:** Producers should have the right to sell to local retail markets, including hospitals and schools. Community gardens and farmers' markets should be encouraged.

**4. LEVEL PLAYING FIELDS:** Subsidies should be paid only to actual family farmers and ranchers. Too many subsidies and incentives are handed out to non-Nebraska corporations, off farm managers and packing houses.

**5. PROPERTY RIGHTS AND LOCAL CONTROL:** We must end foreign corporate ownership of farm and ranch land and protect local rights to control the use of land. Energy development in particular must have clear siting, setback and decommissioning regulations that do not abuse eminent domain for private gain.

**6. TECHNOLOGY:** Producers must be full partners in developing technologies in the hemp industry, biofuels, LED greenhouses, water

sensors and onsite solar and wind power applications. Installing broadband is long overdue and our local public power boards, who brought electricity to rural Nebraska, can lead the way again.

**7. RIGHT TO REPAIR:** Producers should have the right to fix their own equipment.

**The Nebraska Democratic Party's Rural Caucus also believes in a strong, prosperous, new future for our rural communities and will work toward:**

**1. ECONOMIC REVIVAL:** Low- and no-interest loans should expand small business, provide for the rebuilding of needed infrastructure and renew retail shopping districts. Private-public partnerships should lead the way.

**2. HOUSING:** The existing housing stock should be updated. And affordable housing should be expanded, particularly for seniors and young people.

**3. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:** Local schools must be preserved as the bedrock of local community life.

**4. LOCAL HEALTH CARE:** Hospitals, community clinics, nursing homes and mental health facilities must remain reasonably nearby for everyone. Transportation to long distance care and long term facilities must be readily available.

**5. DEFEND SMALL:** Big corporations and big box stores are putting small businesses out of business on our Main Streets. Economic incentives to help local enterprises are needed to stop corporate overreach.

The Rural Caucus of the Nebraska Democratic Party is steadfast in its belief that farmers, ranchers and all rural Nebraskans can grow our State and that we should act rapidly to achieve this Bill of Rights for our people.