Marin County Republican Party Platform
October 27, 2011

Preamble

A party platform is normally a statement of present positions. This platform is a statement of future action. With this platform the Marin County Republican Party seeks to unite all Marinites.

We believe we can offer real solutions to improve the quality of life in Marin through economic growth, personal prosperity in the private sector, a reduction of unnecessary regulation, and the development of a sustainable government committed to fiscal frugality.

We believe we can offer real solutions to reform our failed county pension system.

We believe we can offer real solutions to keep our families educated and healthy and our environment safe and clean.

Most importantly, we believe that Californians in Marin County have more in common than not. Regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, disability, political affiliation, or wealth, unsustainable county and local governments hurt us all.

With this platform we hope to clearly convey what Republicans will do in office to ensure the public trust. County and local governments must be held accountable and must be made effective again, not just for Republicans but for all. This platform is a call to our fellow Marinites to learn the principles for which the Marin GOP stands. We ask you to stand together with us to demand the government that Marin County deserves.

The Pension Reform Plan

Under-funded retirement pension benefits for Marin County are estimated to be between $700 million and $1.2 billion. Local governments struggle to keep infrastructure whole and critical services such as police, fire, and sanitation working for residents as state mandated pension requirements consume more and more of their limited resources. Tax payers are given a Hobson’s choice during each election cycle to save these services by accepting ever increasing taxes when, in reality, the additional tax revenues are devoured by unsustainable pension costs.

With declining property tax revenues, unrealistic investment projections, and elected officials unwilling or unable to publicly discuss the root causes of budget deficits, Marin County continues heading toward fiscal catastrophe. With our home values, quality of life, and necessary infrastructure and services all at stake, we must forestall this impending economic collapse.
If entrusted with the future of Marin County and local governments we will:

**Disclose Unfunded Liabilities**

Recognizing the true nature of the unfunded liability problem is the first step to addressing it sensibly. When government underestimates these liabilities, voters are presented with ballot choices that do not reflect necessary solutions. We support transparency in all governmental budget processes so that the people of Marin can easily review individual budget line items well before voting on such budgets.

**Pursue Sustainable Solutions**

To achieve necessary pension reform, it is imperative that we strive for alterations to the existing system; changes such as:

- Extending the age at which an employee is eligible to retire;
- Shifting toward defined employee contributions while eliminating employer-funded contributions, thereby aligning the design of government pension plans with that of the private sector; and
- Revising post-retirement health benefits in order to lower costs.

Finally, our spending needs to reflect our income and no longer continue to outpace it.

**Enact the Recommendations of the Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers:**

On June 22, 2011, the Marin County Council of Mayors and Councilmembers released a report entitled “Government Reform of Pensions and Other Post-Employment Benefits.” The sustainable solutions therein need to be the top priority for our elected officials.

**Support Pension Reform Ballot Measures**

Key to a pension course change are ballot measures that provide voters with a real choice on where their tax dollars are spent. Resolutions by local and county governments calling for pension reform efforts are also necessary.

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**The Economic Growth & Personal Prosperity, Education, and Environment Plan**

Most matters are best solved at the local level before escalating them to the state or federal levels, where the separation from the issues is so vast that it results in inefficiencies and poorly established policies. To that end, we support restoring local control by returning many government functions to the county governments, city governments, and school boards that know what is best for our local communities. Furthermore, we do not believe that state or regional government should impose unfunded mandates on local communities.
If entrusted with the future of the County of Marin, we will:

**Support Economic Growth and Personal Prosperity**

When the financial and regulatory bureaucracies of local and regional governments overreach, the private sector suffers. We see the private sector as our best hope for achieving long-term, sustainable, and responsible economic growth and personal prosperity for everyone in Marin. We are committed to reducing all government financial waste and unnecessary spending that inhibits private sector growth and prosperity. We are also committed to identifying regulatory hindrances to economic growth and to eliminating all unnecessary regulation in those government bodies with which Marin is associated.

**Provide a World Class Education**

California has created a complex and overly complicated system to fund education. This system is perennially held hostage to the state’s annual budget crisis, presenting voters with a choice between raising taxes or slashing education funding in order to mask the true problem of unfunded pension liabilities. This is unacceptable and by uniting behind pension reform, we can deliver an education budget that supports the needs of our students.

The current educational funding system creates an untenable educational environment for Marin’s children. Many Marin school districts face annual shortfalls and must rely on outside resources to provide the bare essentials for education. If school districts were funded reliably, such outside resources could instead be used to augment and improve the quality of students’ education. By eliminating education budget fluctuations and reducing administrative costs, we can focus on the real mission of our schools: educating our students. We support increasing parental involvement, local decision making, safety, and accountability in each school and in each classroom.

**Protect Marin County’s Environment**

Our conservative values align with the goal of conservation: safeguarding the natural resources on which our health and economy depend. Recognizing that environmental protection and economic growth are not mutually exclusive, we will hold our state, county, and local governments accountable for common sense and sustainable environmental regulations that both protect our environment and allow for prosperity. We support initiatives that will reduce congestion and pollution, not simply drain our limited resources. Likewise, we oppose the closure of State Parks in Marin as a way to mask the true debate over pension reform in the state budget. We believe in the people of Marin and support local volunteer organizations once again taking the lead in repairing, sustaining, and improving our environment. We will seek ways to free our local volunteer groups from having to adhere to unnecessary and expensive environmental regulations and to provide such groups with immunity from lawsuits by organizations that profit from environmental litigation. In this way, responsibility for safeguarding our environment will once again reside in the hands of those who care the most: our local businesses, communities, families, and individuals who enjoy the splendor of Marin and wish to preserve such splendor for future generations.