

Introduction

The following pages include an informative and non-partisan political party platform comparison resource.

This resource contains only excerpts from the Democratic and Republican party platforms; you may view the entire platforms online at www.democrats.org/platform and www.gopconvention.com/platform.

In developing this resource, the two platforms were compared issue-by-issue. A concerted effort was made to pull specific proposals and pledges made by each party on the issues. When one party addressed an issue that was not mentioned by the other party, e.g., pornography, we did not include that issue in the comparison resource. Given the constraints of space, not every issue or proposal could be included in this piece.

While we carefully excerpted from the party platforms, the complete documents are immensely more informative. Nothing can substitute for reading the entire platforms themselves.

While a party platform provides broad principles and specific proposals, the candidates for office may not hold exactly to the positions in their party's platform. Review the platforms of the political parties, listen to what the candidates themselves are saying, and examine their voting records on the issues.

There are other political parties in addition to the Democratic and Republican parties, such as the Constitution Party, the Green Party, the Reform Party, the Libertarian Party, the Natural Law Party, and the Socialist Workers Party.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Israel and the Middle East

The Democratic Party is fundamentally committed to the security of our ally Israel and the creation of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors.... Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and should remain an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths.... We will work to transform the Palestinian Authority by promoting new and responsible leadership, committed to fighting terror and promoting democracy. We support the creation of a democratic Palestinian state dedicated to living in peace and security side by side with the Jewish State of Israel.

The Republican Party shares President Bush's commitment to the security of America's democratic ally Israel... We remain committed to ensuring that Israel maintains a qualitative edge in defensive technology over any potential adversaries.... We recognize Israel's right to defend itself in the face of homicide bombings and other attacks against the people of Israel.... We support President Bush's vision of two states, Israel and Palestine... Republicans continue to support moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Israel's capital, Jerusalem.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Gun Ownership

We will protect Americans' Second Amendment right to own firearms, and we will keep guns out of the hands of criminals and terrorists by fighting gun crime, reauthorizing the assault weapons ban, and closing the gun show loophole...

We believe the Second Amendment and all of the rights guaranteed by it should enable law-abiding citizens throughout the country to own firearms in their homes for self-defense. We support efforts... to enhance the instant background check system for gun purchases and to ensure that records of lawful transactions are destroyed in a timely manner. We oppose federal licensing of law abiding gun owners and national gun registration....

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Income Tax

...we must restore our values to our tax code. We want a tax code that rewards work and creates wealth for more people, not a tax code that hoards wealth for those who already have it... We should set taxes for families making more than \$200,000 a year at the same level as in the late 1990s... We will cut taxes for 98 percent of Americans and help families meet the economic challenges of their everyday lives. And we will oppose tax increases on middle class families, including those living abroad. The dream of the middle class should belong to all Americans willing to work for it... We will offer these Americans a ladder to the middle class. That means raising the minimum wage to \$7.00, increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit and extending child credits so that parents who work full-time don't have to raise their children in poverty... We will eliminate the indefensible loopholes in our tax code... And we will eliminate the corporate subsidies that waste taxpayer dollars and undermine fair competition.

...we must keep our economy on the right path by preventing taxes on families from going up next year, making the tax relief of the last four years permanent, and reforming the tax code to make it simpler, fairer, and more growth-oriented... we must:

- Make the tax relief of 2001 and 2003 permanent...
- Build on efforts to develop a tax code that does not punish taxpayers for saving.
- Replace the tax code with a system that is simpler, provides more freedom to our citizens, is pro-growth, boosts the economy, and encourages savings and investment...

We support legislation requiring a super-majority vote in both houses of Congress to raise taxes. We will prohibit retroactive taxation and will not tolerate attempts by federal judges to impose taxes.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

College Education

We will make college affordable for every qualified student with a tax credit for four years of college... We will make student aid faster and simpler to get... We will offer generous tax credits to reduce the price of four years of college for all students... We will strengthen our aid programs for students while eliminating wasteful subsidies for lenders... we will strengthen technical training for those who do not attend college.

Republicans are working to ensure that college is affordable and accessible for America's low- and middle-income families through increased funding of grants, low interest student loans, and tax breaks for working families... President Bush proposes to expand opportunities for math and science education in colleges and universities. Needy students studying math and science will be eligible to receive additional college aid.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

School Choice and Vouchers

Instead of pushing private school vouchers that funnel scarce dollars away from the public schools, we will support public school choice, including charter schools and magnet schools that meet the same high standards as other schools.

...we support state efforts to expand school choice, as well as... funding for new and existing charter schools... The Republican Party supports the efforts of parents who choose faith-based and other nonpublic school options for their children.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Transportation

Our nation's transportation network is an integral part of our economy and an engine for economic expansion that must be strengthened. We are committed to vigorous federal highway and transit initiatives that put Americans to work, relieve traffic congestion, and foster long-term projects at state and local levels.

A safe and efficient transportation system is essential to keeping people and goods moving and cities and communities prosperous....Republicans strongly support a comprehensive transportation policy agenda that enhances safety, reduces congestion, modernizes infrastructure, and promotes economic growth.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Social Security and Retirement Pensions

We must protect the retirement security of America's workers and their families. Workers should never lose all their savings because their employer locked those savings into the company's own stock. We will bar that practice. We need to require honest information and full disclosure, and protect older workers from unfair treatment when their benefits are converted to cash balance plans. At the same time, we will strengthen and promote both defined-contribution and defined-benefit pension plans, and increase the portability of retirement savings and help all families save.

We are absolutely committed to preserving Social Security... We oppose privatizing Social Security or raising the retirement age. We oppose reducing the benefits earned by workers just because they have also earned a benefit from certain public retirement plans. We will repeal discriminatory laws that penalize some retired workers and their families while allowing others to receive full benefits...

Men and women who retire after decades spent in the workforce are entitled to the pensions they and their employers have contributed to throughout their careers. We support the President's proposal to create a new Lifetime Savings Account (LSA)... and to consolidate numerous employer-based retirement plans into a single Employer Retirement Savings Account (ERSA)....

Anyone now receiving Social Security, or close to being eligible for it, is guaranteed that their benefits will not be cut and their taxes will not be raised.

...Personal retirement accounts must be the cornerstone of strengthening and enhancing Social Security. Each of today's workers should be free to direct a portion of their payroll taxes to personal investments for their retirement.... Any new options for retirement security should be voluntary, so workers can choose to remain in the current system or opt for something different.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Stem Cell Research

We will push the boundaries of science in search of new medical therapies and cures... We will secure more funding for aggressive biomedical research seeking affordable and effective therapies based on real science. Stem cell therapy offers hope to more than 100 million Americans who have serious illnesses—from Alzheimer's to heart disease to juvenile diabetes to Parkinson's. We will pursue this research under the strictest ethical guidelines, but we will not walk away from the chance to save lives and reduce human suffering.

Republicans have supported, and will continue to support, important scientific research without undermining the fundamental ethical principles that have guided medical research in this country for decades. We especially welcome and encourage a stronger emphasis on adult stem cell and cord blood stem cell research... We strongly support the President's policy that prevents taxpayer dollars from being used to encourage the future destruction of human embryos. In addition, we applaud the President's call for a comprehensive ban on human cloning and on the creation of human embryos solely for experimentation.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Environment

...we will make our air cleaner and our water purer. We will ensure our children can safely play in our neighborhoods, our families can enjoy our national parks, and our sportsmen can hunt and fish in our lakes and forests. We will foster a healthy economy and a healthy environment by promoting new technologies that create good jobs and improve our world. And we will work with our allies to achieve these goals and to protect the global environment, for this generation and future generations....

We will work with communities to reduce water pollution-not only from factories, but also from large corporate farms, storm water runoff, and sewer overflows.... We will protect Nevada and its communities from the high-level nuclear waste dump at Yucca mountain which has not been proven to be safe by sound science. We know that America's fight for healthy environment cannot be waged within our borders alone.... climate change is a major international challenge that requires global leadership from the United States, not abdication. We must restore American leadership on this issue as well as others such as hazardous waste emissions and depleted fisheries.

Our Party's environmental policies are geared towards results. Thanks to President Bush's strong leadership and the commitment of Congressional Republicans to reform and innovation, air pollution has been reduced, water quality has improved, wetlands have been restored, and more than a thousand brownfields sites are being revitalized. Republicans also acknowledge the progress made by states and local communities in environmental stewardship efforts. As the laboratories of innovation, they should be given flexibility and authority to address many environmental concerns.

... we link the security of private property to our environmental agenda because environmental stewardship has been best advanced where property is privately held... Republicans are committed to meeting the challenge of long-term global climate change by relying on markets and new technologies to improve energy efficiency. These efforts will help reduce emissions over time while allowing the economy to grow. Our President and our Party strongly oppose the Kyoto Protocol and similar mandatory carbon emissions controls that harm economic growth and destroy American jobs.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Education

...we believe in an America that offers the best education to all our children- wherever they live, whatever their background.

We believe schools must teach fundamental skills like math and science, and fundamental values like citizenship and responsibility. We believe providing resources without reform is a waste of money, and reform without resources is a waste of time.

...we will offer high quality early learning opportunities, smaller classes, more after school activities, and more individualized attention for our students, particularly students with special needs, gifts, and talents. The federal government will meet its financial obligations for elementary and secondary education and for special education.

We must raise pay for teachers... We must improve mentoring, professional development, and new technology training for teachers... At the same time, we must create rigorous new incentives and tests for new teachers.... Parents are our children's first and most important teachers, and they have a responsibility to participate in their children's education....

... we will expand and improve preschool and Head Start initiatives with the goal of offering these opportunities to all children.... we will work on a bipartisan basis to reform foster care.

Public education, access for every child to an excellent education, is a foundation of a free, civil society.

Every child deserves a first-rate education, because every child holds infinite potential, and we should give them every opportunity to reach it....

We are the party willing to embrace new ideas and put them to the test....

Now is the time to extend the progress we've made. The No Child Left Behind Act is already showing gains in elementary school... Our next mission is to take the reforms that we know are working in elementary schools and apply them up and down the education ladder- starting in early childhood education, so that children enter school ready to learn, and finishing in high school, so that every young adult who graduates has the skills he or she needs to succeed in the 21st century economy.... We pledge to bring real reform to high schools.... state and local governments must assume most of the responsibility to improve the schools, and the role of the federal government must be limited as we return control to parents, teachers, and local school boards....reading is the new civil right. Every child must be able to read by the end of the third grade.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Labor Unions

We will ensure that the right to organize a union exists in the real world, not just on paper, because that's how we create more jobs that can support families. That means reforming our labor laws to protect the rights of workers (including public employees) to bargain contracts and organize on a level playing field without interference. It also means barring the permanent replacement of legal strikers.

We affirm the time-honored right of individuals to voluntarily participate in labor organizations and to bargain collectively. We also believe that no American should be coerced into an association they do not wish to join. And no one should be kept out of a job for which they are qualified simply because they choose to remain independent of labor unions. We therefore support the right of states to enact Right-to-Work laws.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Civil Rights

Our commitment to civil rights is ironclad. We will restore vigorous federal enforcement of our civil rights laws for all our people, from fair housing to equal employment opportunity, from Title IX to the Americans with Disabilities Act. We support affirmative action to redress discrimination and to achieve the diversity from which all Americans benefit. We believe a day's work is worth a day's pay, and at a time when women still earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men, we need stronger equal pay laws and stronger enforcement of them. . . . We will enact the bipartisan legislation barring workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The Republican Party favors aggressive, proactive measures to ensure that no individual is discriminated against on the basis of race, national origin, gender, or other characteristics covered by our civil rights laws. We also favor recruitment and outreach policies that cast the widest possible net so that the best-qualified individuals are encouraged to apply for jobs, contracts, and university admissions. We believe in the principle of affirmative access-taking steps to ensure that disadvantaged individuals of all colors and ethnic backgrounds have the opportunity to compete economically and that no child is left behind educationally.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Abortion

We will defend the dignity of all Americans against those who would undermine it. Because we believe in the privacy and equality of women, we stand proudly for a woman's right to choose, consistent with Roe v. Wade, and regardless of her ability to pay. We stand firmly against Republican efforts to undermine that right. At the same time, we strongly support family planning and adoption incentives. Abortion should be safe, legal, and rare.

...the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and we endorse legislation to make it clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children....

We oppose using public revenues for abortion and will not fund organizations which advocate it.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Same-Sex "Marriage"

We support full inclusion of gay and lesbian families in the life of our nation and seek equal responsibilities, benefits, and protections for these families. In our country, marriage has been defined at the state level for 200 years, and we believe it should continue to be defined there. We repudiate President Bush's divisive effort to politicize the Constitution by pursuing a "Federal Marriage Amendment." Our goal is to bring Americans together, not drive them apart.

We strongly support President Bush's call for a Constitutional amendment that fully protects marriage, and we believe that neither federal nor state judges nor bureaucrats should force states to recognize other living arrangements as equivalent to marriage. We further believe that legal recognition and the accompanying benefits afforded couples should be preserved for that unique and special union of one man and one woman which has historically been called marriage.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Health Care

We will attack the health care crisis with a comprehensive approach. Our goal is straightforward: quality, affordable health coverage for all Americans to keep our families healthy, our businesses competitive, and our country strong... every expectant mother should get quality prenatal care; every child should get regular check-ups; every senior should be able to get safe, affordable prescription drugs; and no hardworking family should ever lose everything because illness strikes a loved one.

We will strengthen Medicaid for our families and expand the children's health program created under President Clinton so no child goes without medical care.

...we will offer individuals and businesses tax credits to make quality, reliable health coverage more affordable. We will provide tax credits to Americans who are approaching retirement age and those who are between jobs so they can afford quality, reliable coverage. We will expand coverage for low income adults through existing federal-state health care programs. And we will provide all Americans with access to the same coverage that members of Congress give themselves.... We will lift a financial burden on families, businesses, and the self-employed by picking up the tab for the highest-cost medical cases.

We will enact a real Patient's Bill of Rights to put doctors and nurses back in charge of making medical decisions with their patients-instead of allowing HMO bureaucrats to decide what a patient needs.

The cost of providing health care for employees is a major burden for American businesses.... We must attack the root causes of high health care costs by: aiding small businesses in offering health care to their employees; empowering the self-employed through access to affordable coverage; putting patients and doctors in charge of medical decisions; reducing junk lawsuits and limiting punitive damage awards that raise the cost of health care; and seizing the cost-saving and quality-enhancing potential of emerging health technologies.

Republicans recognize that health care is intrinsic to every family's economic comfort. Proposals... such as Health Savings Accounts and Association Health Plans, provide economic benefits while also making health care more consumer-driven and increasing access to high-quality, affordable health care. We reject any notion of government-run universal health care... And we applaud efforts by President Bush and the Republican Congress to reform the broken medical liability system that is raising health care costs and limiting patients' access to doctors-doctors who are being driven out of their practices by excessive medical liability costs. We support continued efforts to make health care more affordable, more accessible, and more consumer-driven.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Cuba

We support effective and peaceful strategies to end the Castro regime as soon as possible ... We will work with the international community to increase political and diplomatic pressure on the Castro regime to release all political prisoners, support civil society, promote the important work of Cuban dissidents, and begin a process of genuine political reform. Within this framework the Democratic Party supports a policy of principled travel to Cuba that promotes family unity and people-to-people contacts through educational and cultural exchanges....

...we support President Bush's principled position that the current embargo on trade with, and restrictions on travel to, Cuba must remain in place as long as the Cuban government refuses to hold free and fair elections, ease its stranglehold on private enterprise, and allow the Cuban people to organize, assemble, and speak freely.

...Republicans also support efforts to increase the number of new migrants admitted from Cuba through a safe, legal, and orderly process...

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

**Homosexuals
in the Military**

We are committed to equal treatment of all service members and believe all patriotic Americans should be allowed to serve our country without discrimination, persecution, or violence.

We affirm traditional military culture, and we affirm that homosexuality is incompatible with military service.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

AIDS

Addressing global health challenges-including the AIDS pandemic-is a humanitarian obligation and a national security imperative. We are committed to a coordinated effort to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States and in all other regions throughout the world... Our global health policy will bring the best of our scientific knowledge, financial resources, management skills, and compassion to the challenge of improving health conditions around the world. And we will restore America's leadership in global health by rejecting policies driven by ideology instead of science.

We fully support the President's leadership in dramatically expanding resources to find an HIV/AIDS vaccine and in devoting at least \$15 billion over five years towards global prevention, care, and treatment programs.

... We support the emphasis on prevention in the President's Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS relief and endorse its embrace of the successful Ugandan model promoting the "ABC" approach to prevention that encourages abstinence and being faithful to one lifetime partner... We support the expansion of programs providing support for those orphaned by HIV/AIDS....

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Iraq

We cannot allow a failed state in Iraq that inevitably would become a haven for terrorists and a destabilizing force in the Middle East. And we must secure more help from an international community that shares a huge stake in helping Iraq become a responsible member of that community...

As a first step, we must create a stable and secure environment in Iraq. To do this right, we must truly internationalize both politically and militarily: we cannot depend on a US-only presence.... we need to create an international High Commissioner to serve as the senior international representative working with the Iraqi government.... At the same time, U.S. and international policies must take into consideration the best interests of the Iraqi people.... They need to see the tangible benefits of reconstruction: jobs, infrastructure, and services. They should also receive the full benefits of their own oil production as quickly as possible, so as to rebuild their country and help themselves as individuals, while also reducing the costs of security and reconstruction on the American taxpayer and the cost of gasoline to American consumers.

In Iraq, America is serving the cause of liberty, peace, and our own security. America accepted a difficult task in Iraq. We know that for all these reasons, we will finish that task.... Republicans believe that America and the world must keep our commitments to the people of [Afghanistan and Iraq] those countries, who are building the world's newest democracies and counting on the world to help. Delivering these nations from tyranny has required sacrifice and loss. We must honor that sacrifice by finishing the great work we have begun.

Republicans appreciate the military, financial, and technical assistance provided by the dozens of nations contributing to the reconstruction of Afghanistan and Iraq. We applaud President Bush's announcement of U.S. support for five new initiatives that will help the Afghan people achieve the peace, stability, and prosperity they deserve-through support for the development of democracy, educational assistance, cultural exchanges, enhanced bilateral economic ties, and increased economic opportunity for women.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

National Security and Combating Terrorism

...we need a new national security policy guided by four new imperatives: First, America must launch and lead a new era of alliances for the post-September 11 world. Second, we must modernize the world's most powerful military to meet the new threats. Third, in addition to our military might, we must deploy all that is in America's arsenal—our diplomacy, our intelligence system, our economic power, and the appeal of our values and ideas. Fourth and finally, to safeguard our freedom and ensure our nation's future, we must end our dependence on Mideast oil....

We need a new strategy for homeland security that addresses five major challenges. We need to improve our ability to gather, analyze, and share information so we can track down terrorists and stop them before they cause harm. We need to do a better job securing our airports, seaports, and borders. We need to harden likely terrorist targets. We need to improve domestic readiness. Finally, we must win the war on terror without losing the values of freedom and justice for all that make us so proud to be Americans.

We endorse the efforts of President Bush and Republicans in Congress to keep our homeland safe by taking action on multiple fronts, all aimed at stopping terrorists before they strike.... Defeating terrorism requires the United States to:

- help establish stable and democratic governments in nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq that once supported terrorism;
- support front-line states and coalition partners;
- deepen counterterrorism, intelligence, and law enforcement cooperation with allies and friends; and
- energetically promote democracy, especially in the Broader Middle East.

We applaud President Bush's continued strong leadership in intelligence reform. We therefore support President Bush's request to Congress to create the position of a National Intelligence Director to be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

**Appointment
of Judges**

We support the appointment of judges who will uphold our laws and constitutional rights, not their own narrow agendas.

We believe that the self-proclaimed supremacy of... judicial activists is antithetical to the democratic ideals on which our nation was founded.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

The U.S. Economy and Job Creation

We offer America a new economic plan that will put jobs first. We will renew American competitiveness, make honest budget choices, and invest in our future....

We believe the private sector, not government, is the engine of economic growth and job creation. Government's responsibility is to create an environment that will promote private sector investment, foster vigorous competition, and strengthen the foundations of an innovative economy.... we will revive America's manufacturing sector, create new jobs and protect existing ones by ending tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas and cutting taxes for companies that create jobs here at home; by fighting for free, fair and balanced trade; by encouraging investment in small businesses and helping companies deal with rising health care costs; by promoting new technologies, like energy....

America's economy is the strongest in the world, and it is getting stronger thanks to lower taxes, fewer burdensome regulations, and a focus on encouraging investment.

Our goal is to make sure America remains the strongest economy in a dynamic world and to make it possible for every American who wants a job to find one. We must ensure that workers are equipped with the education and training to succeed in the best jobs of the 21st century, and we must encourage the strong spirit of innovation that has put America at the forefront of new technology industries. Future prosperity demands that we have affordable, cleaner, more independent energy supplies and affordable, high-quality health care. We must maintain our commitment to free and fair trade, lower taxes, limited regulation, and a limited, efficient government that keeps up with the new realities of a changing world....

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Faith-Based Initiatives

We honor the central place of faith in the lives of our people. Like our Founders, we believe that our nation, our communities, and our lives are made vastly stronger and richer by faith and the countless acts of justice and mercy it inspires. We will strengthen the role of faith-based organizations in meeting challenges like homelessness, youth violence, and other social problems. At the same time, we will honor First Amendment protections and not allow public funds to be used to proselytize or discriminate.... we will always protect all Americans' freedom to worship.

We applaud President Bush's efforts to promote the generous and compassionate work of America's faith-based and neighborhood charities.... We commend the President for his steadfast support of people and institutions of faith, and we urge the Congress to act on legislative proposals to enhance private-sector works of charity and compassion. We also affirm that the hiring rights of religious organizations must be maintained so that religious charities do not have to abandon their religious character in order to provide publicly funded services.

DEMOCRAT

REPUBLICAN

Federal Spending

We will restore commonsense budget rules... like "Pay-As-You-Go" rules that require the government to pay for new initiatives. We will commit to living within tough budget caps-real and enforceable limits on what the government can spend. We will enact a Constitutional version of the line-item veto to make it easier to root out pork-barrel spending.

And we will make our government more efficient by cutting the waste of taxpayer dollars in the federal budget, from unneeded travel budgets to crony contracting. We are committed to cutting the deficit in half over the next four years.

Spending limits will help Congress restrain the growth of government. We support a cap on discretionary spending that will limit the growth of overall spending while ensuring that priorities such as our nation's security will continue to be met.... To further the goal of respecting taxpayers' dollars and restraining spending, we endorse the creation of a line-item veto ...

We endorse creating a [sunset] commission to evaluate discretionary spending on federal agencies and programs to ensure that taxpayer funds are being used for the best, most efficient purposes.... we support extending the pay-as-you-go requirement for mandatory spending only.