

democracy **DR**  
**OWU** restored  
mock convention



# Platform

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1 **2008 Democratic Party Platform:**

2 ***Democracy Restored: One Nation, Many Issues***

3  
4 During the 1990s, when a Democrat controlled the White House, Americans were blessed  
5 with twenty-three million new jobs, lower crime rates, friendly relations with our allies, and a  
6 robust budget surplus that promised to shore up needy programs and lead the country to further  
7 prosperity.

8 Unfortunately, the leadership of President George W. Bush has consumed the budget  
9 surplus and brought America into an age of record deficits. On his watch, millions of American  
10 jobs have been lost, and tens of millions of Americans continue to go without health care. Most  
11 disturbing, however, has been this President's dismal leadership.

12 After the tragedy of September 11, 2001, his administration squandered the good will  
13 offered us by so many around the world. His poorly conceived foreign policy has angered even  
14 our own allies. Additionally, the administration's lack of planning in Afghanistan and Iraq has  
15 lost us more lives than necessary and brought us less success than our troops deserve, while the  
16 administration itself has forgotten the notion of "the buck stops here." A refusal to admit to  
17 mistakes has prevented this country from fixing problems in our intelligence, security and  
18 beyond. In short, this administration has failed.

19 We must, then, revive what we have lost and create what is still needed. We must  
20 recognize the pride and benefit that comes from every American having a good job and then  
21 create good jobs so that every American may have one. We must secure our citizens in the  
22 homeland, through reasonable and strong defense, health care for every American and excellent  
23 education for every child. We must renew the centuries' old friendships we have with other  
24 countries, and strive to create new friendships with alienated adversaries. We must live up to our  
25 promise as the greatest nation on earth, and show what that means by providing our citizens the  
26 best opportunities and our fellow countries the strongest leadership and help.

27 We have much to give, and yet, much is still needed. Let us move this country forward,  
28 and let us move it forward together, side-by-side, North with South, East with West, black with  
29 white, rich with poor. I call on you to unite behind this platform and our chosen Presidential and  
30 Vice Presidential candidates so that we may be strong enough to reclaim the White House and the  
31 American dream.

## **Environmental Policy**

### *Alternative Energy*

With growing concerns over energy independence, global climate change, and other such issues, America needs to move forward in developing and using alternative energy sources. We support an increase in alternative energy use to 20% of all energy by the year 2020, and an increase to at least 50% by the year 2050. These steps to increase alternative energy use will help to ease our dependence on foreign sources of fossil fuel and help boost our energy production at home. Although not all alternative energy sources are equally viable, solar power, wind power, geothermal power, tidal power, and hydroelectric power are the most promising forms of alternative energy thus far. We support further research into these energy sources and government assistance for companies developing and selling power from alternative energy sources. Additionally, alternative fuels for transportation need to be developed. Ethanol and bio-diesel production will help our farmers and economy by providing more jobs. Also, the adoption of alternative fuels will cut down on greenhouse gas pollution and other air pollutants as while making America more energy independent.

### *Global Climate Change*

The latest research has proved, beyond reasonable doubt, that global climate change is a serious issue that needs immediate attention. As the overall temperature of the Earth rises, the polar ice caps melt; species are displaced and become extinct, and stronger storms, such as Hurricane Katrina, occur more often. There are three key steps that can be taken to decrease these effects. First, we need to instill a market-based “Cap and Trade” system of capping greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. Scientists recommend a goal of reducing emissions by 80% of the 1990 levels by the year 2050, a goal we recommend. Secondly, we support raising fuel economy standards for car manufacturers. Our recommendation calls for legislation that will raise the US average from approximately 27 miles per gallon to 40 miles per gallon by the year 2017. Finally, we need to increase use of renewable energy, including automobile fuels. This will decrease our consumption of fossil fuels, which produce large amounts of dangerous gases and will decrease our dependence on oil imported from the Middle East.

1 **Social Policy**

2 *Affirmative Action*

3 The Democratic Party is proud of its tradition of supporting increased economic and  
4 educational opportunities for the historically disadvantaged. This means giving women and  
5 minorities fair consideration in employment and a reasonable amount of preferred consideration  
6 in admission to institutions of higher education (in light of the disadvantaged backgrounds of  
7 many such applicants).

8  
9 *Civil Liberties*

10 The Bush Administration during its term of office has routinely violated basic civil liberties  
11 ranging from the right to privacy to the right to the pursuit of happiness. The president has  
12 continually approved warrantless searches and seizures based on the Patriot Act. The  
13 Administration detains citizens and legal residents and denies them their right to due process  
14 based on a simple suspicion in the name of homeland security. The Democratic Party calls on our  
15 next president to limit if not completely end this practice, which continues to diminish our sense  
16 of personal freedom every day. We recognize that discrimination is not a concern of the past and  
17 still affects millions of Americans each day. Thus, we urge the next presidential administration to  
18 end practices such as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” in the military, and end workplace discrimination  
19 as well as pursue expanded anti-hate crime legislation. Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell has proven to be an  
20 outdated policy. Almost twenty-five nations serving in Iraq with the United States allow open-  
21 service with no evidence that this accepting policy has negatively impacted their military program  
22 or results. Further, there is still a great gender divide in the workplace. Women continue to earn  
23 about 77 cents for every dollar men earn for similar work. Often women are still not able to  
24 attain the same financial success as males in their field, and therefore are possibly not able to  
25 attain the same quality of life simply because of their gender. We support developing a  
26 commission to investigate the causes and possible solutions of workplace inequality. Finally, we  
27 support expanding hate crime legislation to include crimes based on gender, sexual orientation,  
28 and disability in order to further promote equality and acceptance in our society.

29  
30 *College Affordability*

31 A college education is a key component of success in modern American society. College  
32 graduates can expect to earn \$1 million more over their lifetime than high school graduates, and  
33 their children are almost twice as likely to attend college themselves. We support the  
34 establishment of a “College for Everyone” program, modeled after the program founded in

1 Greene County, North Carolina. The program would include a national initiative to help pay for  
2 college tuition and related expenses. In return for the aid, qualifying students would work part-  
3 time during college and maintain good behavior. Also, we believe that the process for obtaining  
4 financial aid process should be less complicated. Today, over a million eligible families do not  
5 apply for financial aid because the FAFSA forms are needlessly complicated and lengthy. Many  
6 families who do fill out the form require classes in order to do so. The complexity of such forms  
7 should not hinder a student's ability to attend college, and we support reforming FAFSA and  
8 other financial aid documents.

9  
10 *Death Penalty*

11 The Eighth Amendment guarantees all Americans the right against cruel and unusual  
12 punishment. We assert that the Death Penalty is both cruel and unusual, and thus should be  
13 reviewed and potentially prohibited in the future. The methods used are supposed to be humane  
14 and result in a relatively painless death, such as lethal injection. However, there are many  
15 documented instances in which mistakes were made and citizens were subjected to immense pain  
16 and discomfort. Also, the punishment is applied disproportionately to people of color and  
17 disadvantaged backgrounds. For instance, 42% of death-row inmates are African American, yet  
18 African Americans make up only 13% of the United States population. It is estimated that up to  
19 98% of death row inmates are defendants who could not afford to provide their own attorney.  
20 Considering the death penalty as a punishment is not equally applied, we believe it to be unusual  
21 in nature. Since the Death Penalty was reinstated in 1976, about 700 death row inmates have  
22 been executed and more than 100 inmates have been released from prison after being proven  
23 innocent. Thus, for every seven prisoners that are executed, one has been found innocent and  
24 released. This record clearly demonstrates that mistakes are made, innocent people are sentenced  
25 to death, and thus, the system is far from full proof. With this evidence, we call for a total re-  
26 evaluation of the legality and effectiveness of this penalty.

27  
28 *Education:*

29 Fifty-three years after the landmark decision finally desegregating schools, *Brown v.*  
30 *Board of Education* (1954), America's education system is still unequal. Though, it is not a clear  
31 divide along ethnic or religious lines, it does not exist at socioeconomic levels. Children whose  
32 families cannot afford to live in the best neighborhoods or to attend the best schools are being left  
33 behind. We believe that America needs to turn over a new leaf and develop a new plan to change  
34 the current course of our future: our children.

1           Our plan is three-fold. First, we need to prepare every child to succeed. Quality  
2 preschool should be available to everyone in order to start stimulating children to grow mentally  
3 and socially at an earlier age. The most vital aspect of schools today is the teacher who builds  
4 relationships with their students; we thus support pay raises to bring quality teachers to  
5 impoverished neighborhoods that cannot otherwise afford the best quality teachers. To improve  
6 teacher working environments, we also support putting federal funds towards reducing average  
7 class sizes to a consistent and manageable size. Every child in the United States should have the  
8 opportunity to attend an excellent public school. We need to eliminate No Child Left Behind in  
9 favor of a program that actually helps children, instead of simply administering standardized  
10 tests. By eliminating this program and salaries based on such test scores, teachers will be able to  
11 expand their curriculum, as there will no longer be an incentive to “teach to the test”. Instead of  
12 measuring a student’s test-taking ability, evaluation techniques should be developed to measure a  
13 school’s improvement and effectiveness. Finally for this plan to create a success driven  
14 environment, optimistic educators, and excellent schools, we need to have a system that allows  
15 every high school student the opportunity to pursue a secondary education without concern for  
16 their ability to pay.

17  
18 *Health Care*

19           Health care coverage should be extended to all Americans. We will focus on controlling  
20 costs in the private sector and extending tax credits to working families and small businesses to  
21 help purchase insurance plans; as part of these reforms, premiums will not be allowed to exceed a  
22 set percentage of family income. Citizens who are satisfied with their current healthcare plan  
23 should be able to keep it, but also permitted to opt into coverage similar to that received by the  
24 United States Congress. Additionally, Medicare and State Children’s Health Insurance Program  
25 (SCHIP) should be fully funded. Mental health parity should be included as a part of all such  
26 coverage. Drug companies should be required to provide both reasonable prices and accurate  
27 information. In order to promote intelligent, preventative care, the United States should develop  
28 regional and national strategies to streamline and improve public health and examine the federal  
29 government’s policies across a broad spectrum of medical areas to assess their impact on public  
30 health.

31  
32 *Immigration*

33           Immigration is a one of the most serious issues in this presidential election. It is a  
34 dividing issue with no simple solution. We recognize that neither building a fence nor deporting

1 over 10 million immigrants are reasonable alternatives, however steps must be taken in order to  
2 secure our borders and combat the problem of companies employing illegal workers. When a  
3 company hires illegal workers, they are able to avoid many federal labor laws because their  
4 employees are not in a position to report violations. While we do not support complete amnesty  
5 for all illegal residents, we do support a reasonable path to legalization. The Democratic Party  
6 also urges that the United States and Mexico work together to solve the problems forcing  
7 Mexican citizens to cross the border into the United States, including a full evaluation of the  
8 affects of trade agreements such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

9  
10 *Poverty*

11 Poverty has become a widespread and deep-seated problem in American society and we  
12 believe it is time to find a solution. There are close to 35 million people living below the poverty  
13 line in the United States and millions more struggle to make ends meet each day. Finding such a  
14 solution will require several steps. First, we recommend that the federal government work toward  
15 raising the minimum wage to half of the national average wage at about \$17.00 per hour.  
16 Minimum wage also needs to be indexed according to inflation to constantly keep it adjusted to  
17 rising costs of living. Further, the Earned Income Tax and Child Tax Credits should be expanded  
18 to include all low and moderate-income families. Also, the United States needs to expand access  
19 to jobs by investing in career pathway programs that would assist low-income citizens, helping  
20 them find success in the workplace. Such benefits should also be available to criminal offenders  
21 to reduce repeat offender rates. Among the most important objectives of lowering the poverty  
22 rate is strengthening families, so that more children are brought up in homes that promote  
23 positive, productive ideals. In order to accomplish this objective, we should increase funding to  
24 programs that enforce rules requiring fathers to provide child support payments and make certain  
25 that those payments go entirely to the families in need. In addition, we suggest expanding  
26 minimum paid sick days to guarantee all workers enough leave to maintain their health and the  
27 health of their children. While these suggestions are not all encompassing, we believe they are  
28 vital steps toward bringing all Americans out of poverty.

29  
30 *Reproductive Rights*

31 The Democratic Party supports a woman's right to make important decisions with regard  
32 to her own body. We oppose the conservative right's efforts to limit the constitutional right to  
33 privacy recognized by the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade*. Such personal decisions should be  
34 determined by a woman and her family with consideration of her religious morals and ethical

1 values; not dictated to a woman by the government, with consideration of someone else's views  
2 on religious morals and ethical values.

3 We also recognize that increased access to family planning services will aid the United  
4 States, not hinder us, in achieving the noble goal of making abortions safe, legal, and rare. This  
5 includes ensuring that Plan B (a.k.a. the morning after pill) continues to be available over-the-  
6 counter, as well as mandating insurance coverage for birth-control pills. Also, we must educate  
7 America's youth comprehensively about the risks involved in sexual activity, as well as ways to  
8 mitigate them.

### 9 10 *Social Security*

11 We need to emphasize fiscal responsibility in handling Social Security, and we support  
12 honesty in dealing with the American people about the program's solvency issues. This does not  
13 mean, however, that Social Security cannot be protected as a vital asset to our seniors who want  
14 to live out their latter years with dignity. First, we will raise the amount of income that is subject  
15 to matching payroll taxes by employers. The level is currently set at the first \$97,500 of a  
16 worker's income – such an increase would only affect the top 6% of income earners' employers  
17 and therefore not create an undue burden on the average American worker or small business.  
18 Secondly, we will return fiscal responsibility to the federal government by ensuring that the  
19 federal budget is balanced; prior to the year 2000, fiscal responsibility alone would have left  
20 Social Security solvent until 2055, but the recent return to heavy deficit spending is putting our  
21 seniors' peace of mind in jeopardy.

22 Being responsible also means continuing to oppose attempts to privatize Social Security –  
23 we cannot gamble with our seniors' valuable savings.

## Foreign Policy

### *Afghanistan & Pakistan*

Afghanistan is peaking at its highest level of violence since the year 2001. The United States government should surge combat troops into Afghanistan to fight the real War on Terror against the increasing presence and violence of Al Qaeda and capture Bin Laden. The United States should define its enemy as Al Qaeda and set an initial budget of \$100 billion while establishing timeline and goals.

### *AIDS*

Part of reducing global poverty includes fighting the global AIDS epidemic. The Democratic Party will make it a priority to end the deaths of more than 10 million children from AIDS and other preventable diseases. The United States should put forth an initial \$10 billion investment toward the purchase of \$4 doses of medicine that can prevent a mother from transmitting AIDS to her newborn during birth. An additional few cents per child will also be invested to vaccinate children against AIDS. The initial investment will focus on regions prone to AIDS such as sub-sahararan Africa.

### *Darfur*

The Democratic Party recognizes the ongoing atrocities in the Darfur region led by the Sudanese government and does not condone any form of genocide. The U.S. government should call an emergency meeting within 60 days of the next presidential administration's inauguration with NATO's leadership to bring effective and timely peace to the Darfur region. The United States must convince NATO, with the aid of many accomplished countries, to support operationally and financially the deployment of U.N. troops to ensure peace. NATO should also declare a no-fly zone to cut off supplies to the militias and the bombing of innocent civilians. NATO countries should also place heavy sanctions on the Sudanese government and other supporters to achieve a peaceful end to the ongoing acts against humanity.

### *Global poverty*

As a world power, it is the United States' obligation to reduce global poverty, which will in turn increase international security. America should change its approach to the world by pledging an initial \$20 billion initiative to support three areas: primary education, preventative health, and greater economic and political opportunity.

1 *Human Rights (Guantanamo Bay)*

2 The Democratic Party in no way supports any form of torture and believes the United States  
3 should uphold the highest level of human rights, even for war criminals.

4

5 *Iraq*

6 The United States should end our military presence in Iraq's Civil War. The government will  
7 declare a plan to withdraw troops within the first 120 days of the next Presidential  
8 Administration's inauguration. The United States will have all U.S. combat troops removed from  
9 the region by the year 2011. The United States will move their focus toward stabilizing Iraq and  
10 helping build a stable Iraqi government. America should encourage the appointment of a U.N.  
11 representative to aid in the rebuilding of Iraq and place the future in their hands.

12

13 *Israel and Palestine*

14 The Israel Palestinian Conflict plays a critical role in Middle Eastern Affairs. The United  
15 States should double foreign investment in Israel from \$3 billion to \$7 billion a year. The  
16 Democratic Party recognizes and supports Israel and denounces Palestinian state-hood, since it  
17 has been allegedly connected with terrorism. Increased American investment will fully fund  
18 Israel's military and ensure Israel's sovereignty, freedom and democracy.

19

20 *NATO Expansion*

21 The Democratic Party believes that an expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty  
22 Organization (NATO)'s involvement in Afghanistan and other regional disputes is crucial to  
23 developing an enduring peace. We continue to support the enlargement of NATO to include  
24 states that espouse democratic ideals and whose development reflects a strong desire to address  
25 the overarching security concerns facing Europe and the North Atlantic region. We encourage  
26 continued engagement with the Partnership for Peace and Mediterranean Dialogue countries in  
27 the hopes that a new round of NATO enlargement will be in progress by the year 2010.

28

29 *Nuclear Proliferation (Iran, North Korea)*

30 Nuclear weapons pose the greatest danger to the American people in the War on Terror,  
31 thus it is in the interest of the United States to secure rogue nuclear weapons. The United States  
32 should deploy nuclear weapons on terrorist training camps in order to keep America safe from  
33 threats and other nuclear weapons away from the hands of the terrorists. The United States should  
34 secure all loose nuclear material in the world within four years of the next presidential

1 administration's inauguration. We should negotiate with the global community to ban the  
2 production of new nuclear weapons and strictly enforce the Non-Proliferation Treaty, placing  
3 serious international sanctions on countries that violate its guidelines, including North Korea and  
4 Iran.

#### 6 *Role of the United Nations*

7 America needs to reassert itself as a global leader diplomatically following the problems  
8 caused by the current administration. In order to help reassert the United State's position as a  
9 world leader, America needs to rebuild its strong position in the United Nations. As far as topics  
10 like genocide, international trade, environmental issues, and peace building in war-torn parts of  
11 the globe are concerned, we support America taking a powerful, leading role. However, the  
12 United States, in taking this leading role, should not become subordinate to the wishes of the  
13 United Nations in all circumstances. As a leader, we need to assert our sovereign independence  
14 and power as a nation. This can be done without alienating the international community  
15 concerning the Iraq War, global climate change, and other important issues of the day. In  
16 addition, while taking a leading role in the United Nations, we need to consider all issues facing  
17 the UN, not only those with direct economic or political consequences for the United States.  
18 International issues like genocide in Darfur and global climate change need to be addressed by  
19 the United States as well as by the United Nations.

#### 20 *Russia*

21 America should work towards a nuclear free world by working with Russia to reduce the  
22 tension between our two countries. To pursue a nuclear free world, the United States should  
23 demand that Russia dramatically reduce its stockpiles of nuclear weapons and material by one-  
24 half its present level within six years of the next presidential administration's inauguration.

#### 26 *Torture and the Geneva Conventions*

27 The current administration has to live up to both international and moral obligations,  
28 concerning torture and prisoners captured during the War on Terror. We reaffirm our dedication  
29 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, in particular Convention (III) relative to the Treatment of  
30 Prisoners of War; the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading  
31 Treatment or Punishment; and all other related international treaties that the United States has  
32 ratified.

## Economic Policy

### *Campaign Finance Reform*

We need comprehensive campaign finance reform to ensure that all elected officials act ethically. The Democratic Party has repeatedly supported comprehensive campaign finance reform bills such as the McCain-Feingold bill in the Senate and the Shays-Meehan bill in the House. Additionally, private political groups who act in secret should be required to disclose from where they receive their funding. In order to achieve more ethical campaign financing, the Democratic Party supports public financing of campaigns, as well as free television and radio time as a way to reduce the improper influence of moneyed special interests.

### *Job Creation*

Jobs are absolutely vital to the American economy. With unemployment up to 5% in December 2007 and with the number of new jobs created at a four-year low, job creation is extraordinarily important today. To promote job creation, we need to look to the future. We need to increase federal funding for basic research, as well as make research and development tax credit permanent to assist with creating high-paying, secure jobs. We also need to make long-term investments in education, training, and workforce development

The emerging field of green technology is one area with great potential for job creation. To take advantage of this, we need to invest in alternative energy research, which would create more American jobs. The United States needs to invest in America's manufacturing sector, to ensure that Americans have the skills and tools needed to pioneer the first wave of green technologies that will soon be in high demand throughout the world. By increasing funding for federal workforce training programs and directing these programs to incorporate green technologies training, we will help Americans find and retain stable, high-paying jobs.

### *Trade Policy*

International trade can be an important tool in strengthening the American economy and creating more jobs domestically; however, many American jobs have been outsourced to companies overseas in recent years due to trade agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The United States needs to make sure that trade agreements support American workers as well as American companies. We should improve the existing system of Trade Adjustment Assistance to help Americans who lose their jobs to overseas workers adjust by providing job retraining. To assist workers in sectors that are especially vulnerable to job dislocation, we should provide retraining before they lose their jobs. Finally, the United States

1 should use trade agreements to help spread good labor techniques and environmental standards  
2 around the world; if we can create a trade system in which our partners are held to higher  
3 standards, Americans will have more competitive opportunities to obtain jobs and corporate-led  
4 exploitation of workers in other countries will be eliminated

### *Acknowledgements*

The platform committee, under the direction of the 2008 Mock Convention Executive, spent a great deal of time and effort creating this document. It embodies the spirit of the Democratic Party, and represents our pride in our past, our strength in the present, and our hope for the future. Thanks to all who took part in this achievement:

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**Platform Committee, Co-Chairs**