

PRESS RELEASE – September 2, 2008

Democrats' Platform Outperforms Republican Platform on Issues of Concern to Catholics



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Minneapolis, Minn. - The concerns of Catholic voters are better reflected in the Democratic national platform, ratified at last week's convention in Denver, than in the Republican platform, according to an analysis by the Catholic Democrats. An association of state-based groups representing a Catholic voice within the Democratic Party, the Catholic Democrats is advancing a public understanding of the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and its potential to help solve the broad range of problems confronting all Americans.

"Catholics have enumerated their social concerns in a variety of polls and statements throughout this campaign," said Dr. Patrick Whelan, president of Catholic Democrats. "Like all other Americans, they are deeply concerned about the economy, health care, the environment, and immigration."

"Like all Americans, Catholics are struggling today," said Pat Schaffer, chair of Catholic Democrats of Minnesota. "The Republican platform seems to really lack any fresh ideas to help the millions of Catholics, and other Americans, who are working longer hours just to put food on their tables and gas in the tank."

Catholic voters made up 23% of the respondents who were part of a New York Times/CBS News poll who said that economic concerns should be the main priority in this election. Over the past few months, both Catholic voters and Church leaders have discussed health care, the environment, and immigration as issues that merit wide public discussion during this campaign. In particular, Pope Benedict XVI recently stated that politicians and other public figures must be "capable of responding to the great ecological challenge and to be up to the task of this challenge." Similarly, Cardinal Richard Mahony of Los Angeles has supported a humane approach to immigration reform.

Comparison of Platform

Economy

Democratic National Platform

The Platform leads with economic issues and says, "Families have seen their incomes go down even as they have been working longer hours and as productivity has grown. --- Worse yet, too many Americans have lost confidence in the fundamental American promise that our children will have a better life than we do.

Among other issues, Democrats are pledging to

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- Provide an energy rebate to the middle class;
- Protect public and private retirement plans;
- Support policies that will ensure good jobs with decent wages and benefits;
- Invest in American competitiveness for job creation;
- Restore fairness to the tax code.

Republican National Platform

The platform does not lead with economic concerns,. Instead the Republican platform focuses first on war & security issues, and then emphasizes limiting government spending as its principal approach to domestic policy.

Not until Section 3 does the Republican platform mention the economy. The platform's first economic proposals are not about helping citizens find relief from the economic squeeze of higher food and fuel prices, but defending the tax policies of George W. Bush.

Furthermore, the platform offers no new economic policy insights beyond lowering taxes to promote "economic security." The heading of this section in the platform is emblematic: "The Republican Agenda: Using Tax Relief to Grow the Economy."

Health Care

Democratic National Platform

"Democrats are united around a commitment that every American man, woman, and child be guaranteed affordable, comprehensive healthcare. --- people expressed moral outrage with a health care crisis that leaves millions of Americans--including nine million children--without health insurance and millions more struggling to pay rising costs for poor quality care."

Among other issues, Democrats are pledging to:

- Cover all Americans and provide affordable health insurance options;
- End insurance discrimination;
- Emphasize prevention and wellness;
- Modernize system to lower costs and improve the quality of care.

Republican National Platform

Rather than focusing on how Republicans will fix the healthcare system to ensure that millions of Americans will have the health insurance they need, the Republican platform focuses on what Republicans will not do. The list of five "will nots" severely and substantially limits the potential for Republican healthcare reform.

The platform offers limited and incremental solutions, such as encouraging insurance portability, emphasizing consumer rights for patients, and supporting health care technologies that are long-accepted conventional wisdom strategies.

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Environment

Democratic National Platform

"We will lead to defeat the epochal, man-made threat to the planet: climate change." The Democratic National Platform enumerates how warmer temperatures and declining rainfall will adversely impact the planet and the people living on it. "Never again will we sit on the sidelines, or stand in the way of collective action to tackle this global challenge. Getting our own house in order is only a first step."

Among other issues, Democrats are pledging to:

- Invest in efficient and clean technologies;
- Establish energy security;
- Lead in reinvestment in science and technology.

Republican National Platform

It is encouraging that the Republican platform now acknowledges the challenge of global warming. Unfortunately, the platform still states that global warming is "the subject of ongoing scientific research" and argues against "doomsday climate change scenarios."

Unlike the Democratic platform, the Republican platform makes no pledge to lead on this issue of global importance. Instead, the Republican platform asserts that the market is the solution and proposes the creation of a "Climate Prize" as its big idea.

Immigration

Democratic National Platform

"America has always been a nation of immigrants. Over the years, millions of people have come here in the hope that in America, you can make it if you try.--- Nonetheless, our current immigration system has been broken for far too long. We need comprehensive immigration reform, not just piecemeal efforts. We must work together to pass immigration reform in a way that unites this country, not in a way that divides us by playing on our worst instincts and fears."

Among other issues, Democrats are pledging to:

- Secure our national borders;
- Improve the legal immigration system;
- Find a pathway to legal residency for undocumented workers who are otherwise playing by the rules.

Republican National Platform

The Republican platform focuses on immigration as a security issue, not as a part of the American tradition, and emphasizes securing the borders (a concern shared by the Democratic platform).

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The platform talks about "embracing immigrant communities" by insisting they learn English. Also, the platform uses 54 words to welcome refugees. The platform offers no solutions on integrating immigrants into American society beyond saying that Republicans oppose amnesty.

Abortion

Democratic National Platform

The Democratic platform offers solutions to reducing the number of abortions, saying, "We also recognize that such health care and education help reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and thereby also reduce the need for abortions. The Democratic Party also strongly supports a woman's decision to have a child by ensuring access to and availability of programs for pre- and post-natal health care, parenting skills, income support, and caring adoption programs."

Republican National Platform

Language in the Republican platform that originally invited all people of good will "to work together to reduce the incidence of abortion" was stricken from the final draft. Additionally, the Republican platform offers no commitment to supporting policies that have been proven to encourage women to continue with an unplanned pregnancy.

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About Catholic Democrats

Catholic Democrats is an association of state based groups representing a Catholic voice within the Democratic Party, and advancing a public understanding of the rich tradition of Catholic Social Teaching and its potential to help solve the broad range of problems confronting all Americans. For more information about Catholic Democrats please go to www.catholicdemocrats.org